

The Concept of Reason in International Relations

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Abstract

In this thesis my aims are twofold. First, I provide an auto-history of the concept of reason in Anglophone IR from 1919 to 2009. I uncover the centrality of the language of reason. I show that the concept of reason has constituted, undergirded, and empowered many prominent IR scholars' discourses. Second, I bring out a taxonomy of four construal of rationality. I argue that IR thinkers have spoken in four languages of reason. *Kantian reason* stands in a relation opposed to passion, emotion and instinct, and makes the stipulation that to base actions on the intellect is prerequisite for pursuing interest and moral conduct. I argue that the British Liberal Institutionalists, Has Morgenthau, Richard Ashley and Andrew Linklater are bearers of this construal. *Utilitarian reason* refers to the maximization of interests under constraints, where interest can be defined as strategic preference, emotional attachment, or cultural value and constraints as a two-person game, uncertainty or risk. I demonstrate how Thomas Schelling, Herman Kahn, Glenn Snyder, Robert Keohane, Robert Gilpin, Helen Milner, Andrew Moravcsik and many other theorists use the concept. *Axiological reason* means following rules, cultures and norms, and always uses game as an analytical foundation and attends to the problem of how to enforce rules. I argue that Kenneth Waltz, Nicholas Onuf, Friedrich Kratochwil and K.M. Fierke have deployed the concept to construct their theories. *Historical reason* views all values as conditioned within a specific spatial-temporal background, and insists that moral problems, which are constituted in the margin of every political conduct, must be solved by overcoming universal morality and the unilateral pursuit of interest. I show that Raymond Aron, Martin Wight, David Boucher and Christian Reus-Smit have conceived of reason in this way.

Contents

<u>By Way of Introduction</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Chapter I. Kantian Reason</u>	<u>33</u>
<u>Chapter II. Utilitarian Reason</u>	<u>99</u>
<u>Chapter III. Axiological Reason</u>	<u>165</u>
<u>Chapter IV. Historical Reason</u>	<u>227</u>
<u>Conclusion</u>	<u>283</u>

Table of Analytical Contents

Acknowledgement	9
By Way of Introduction	11
(i) Research Question.....	11
(ii) Methodology	16
(iii) Contributions & Chapter Outlines	24
(iv) A Note on the Term	30
Chapter I. Kantian Reason	33
(i) The English Idealists and the “Revolt against Reason”: 1919-1939	40
“The Great War” and the “Climate of Opinion”	40
International Intellectual Cooperation in the Thought of Alfred Zimmern 1924-1936.....	47
Idealism and Its Upshots	52
(ii) The Realist Reconstruction: The Case of Hans Morgenthau	56
Ideology vs. True Reason: Scientific Man vs. Power Politics 1937-1946	56
Rationality in Theory and Practice: The Construction of “Rational Realism” 1947-1959 (Part I: Political Argumentation).....	63
Rationality in Theory and Practice: The Construction of Rational Realism 1947-1959 (Part II: Theoretical Debate).....	69
Nuclear Weapons and the “Providence of Reason” 1952-1964	75
(iii) The Revival of Kantian Reason since the 1980s.....	80
Early Ashley, Practical Reason, and the Habermasian Reading of Morgenthau	80
Andrew Linklater, “Higher Rationality”, and the Transformation of Political Community (1998).....	87
“Let’s Argue?” Communicative Rationality and German Idealism	92
(iv) Conclusion	94
A “Grammatical” Dissection of the Kantian Dialect	95
The Fall and Resurgence of Kantian Reason	96
History	97
Chapter II. Utilitarian Reason	99
(i) “To Deter or Not to Deter”: Theorizations of Deterrence and Conflict Resolution in the 1950s and 60s.....	105
Deterrence	111
Conflict Resolution	117
The Impacts of the First Utilitarian Movement.....	120
(ii) The Neorealist and Neoliberal Movement of the 1980s.....	123
Hegemony and Legitimacy of Pax Americana	123
Neorealism	127
Neoliberalism (Part I)	131
Neoliberalism (Part II)	137
In Retrospect of the Neo-Neo Theories: A Brief Overview	144
(iii) “Bring the State Back in?” Endogenous Rationalists in the 1990s	147

The Cultural Rationalists	150
Domestic Institutionalists.....	153
(iv) Conclusion	157
The Trajectory of Historical Development	157
The Voice of Utilitarian Reason: Its Defining Features	159
The Myth of the Rationalist Dominance.....	162
The Games that States Play.....	164
Chapter III. Axiological Reason	165
(i) Kenneth Waltz, Rationality and the Theory of International Politics.....	171
Waltz and Reductionist Theories.....	172
Waltz and System Theorizations	175
System and Structure in Theory (Part I): Axiological Rationality	179
System and Structure in Theory (Part II): Theory and Its Utilitarianization.....	187
(ii) Rules and Norms All the Way Down: Rationality in Nicholas Onuf and Friedrich Kratochwil's Thoughts around the Turn of 1990s.....	196
Neo-Neo Theories and the Anarchy Problematique.....	196
Games, Rules, and Rationality	199
Axiological Rationality as Intersubjective Rule-Following.....	203
Waltz, Onuf, and Kratochwil: Beyond the Realism/Constructivism Divide.....	206
(iii) Changing Games, Changing Rationalities and Changing Strategies: K.M. Fierke on the Concept of Reason	208
The "Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory"	208
Axiological Rationality in Language Games	210
The "Rationality of Moving towards a New Game": Grammatical Investigation in Language Games	215
(iv) Conclusion	220
Two Traits of the Axiological Language: Externality and Enforcement	220
How Rules are Recognized: Waltz's Idea of Rationality Reconsidered.....	222
The Problems of Historical Change	224
Chapter IV. Historical Reason	227
(i) Reasonable Action in Thermonuclear Age: Raymond Aron (and Stanley Hoffmann).....	234
Rationality in Deterrence Theory and Morgenthau's "Realism"	234
Raymond Aron's "Reasonable" Diplomatic-Strategic Action.....	240
Reasonableness and Human Being as Historical Existence.....	245
(ii) Martin Wight and "Rationalism"	247
International Theory: The Tradition of Rationalism 1957-1960	248
Rationalism Reconsidered.....	258
(iii) Historical Reason in the Historical Turn: David Boucher and Christian Reus-Smit on Rationality.....	262
Background: The Revenge of History and its "Grand Return" from 1979 to 1999	264
David Boucher and "Historical Reason".....	268
Christian Reus-Smit: "Rationality as a Culturally and Historically Contingent Form of Consciousness"	272
(iv) Conclusion	277
Historical Reason and Its Changing Conceptions	278

The Aesthetics of Historical Reason: Its Pursuit of Realness and Precision.....	279
Going Critical? Critique Transcendent vs. Critique Immanent.....	280
Conclusion: The Historical Development of Reason in International Relations	283
(i) The Crisis of Kantian Reason: Rational Man versus Power Politics (1919-1939).....	283
(ii) From the Second World War to Cold War (Part I, 1940-1959I): Morgenthau and the Realist Reorientation of Kantian Reason and Wight's "Rationalism"	286
(iii) From the Second World War to Cold War (Part II, 1960-1969): The Rise of Utilitarian Reason and Raymond Aron's Reasonableness.....	289
(iv) The Innovation of Axiological Reason (1970-1979).....	292
(v) The Reign of Utilitarian Reason (1980-1990).....	295
(vi) The Development of Reason in the Post-Cold War Era (1991-2009)	297
Bibliography	300

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By Way of Introduction

(i) Research Question

In his presidential address to the International Studies Association (1988), Robert Keohane announced the division of the American study of international institutions into two camps: “Rationalism” and “Reflectivism”.¹ By Rationalism Keohane referred to the theories “regarding states as rational actors with specific utility functions”. Neorealist theorists such as Kenneth Waltz, Neoliberal ones such as Robert Axelrod and Keohane himself, were all alleged to have followed this tradition. Reflectivism, by contrast, was defined by its challenge to its Rationalistic counterpart. Scholars like John Ruggie and Richard Ashley, it was claimed, possessed value only when their works strike, confront, or complement the analysis of international regimes as the action of the “rational actors with specific utility functions”. What Rationalism acquires was precisely what Reflectivism lacks: a core concept such as rationality that could enable them to articulate “a clear reflective research program”.²

Keohane’s demarcation was simple, but its effects have been tremendous. First, by pioneering a novel category of “Rationalism”, Keohane proclaimed that Neorealism and Neoliberalism had transcended their disputant forebears, merged the two schools under the identically rationalistic banner and formed a single, magisterial, mainstream research program. Before Keohane’s speech, not only had the old Realists and Liberals been profoundly separated, but that separation was articulated precisely in terms of rationality.³ E.H. Carr, in his *Twenty Years Crisis* (1939), denounced the conviction held by Norman Angell

¹ Keohane 1988. One of the most fertile sources of confusion within Anglophone IR is the (ab)use of “ism”. I shall either eschew to use them, or make my referents clear when have to do so.

² Keohane 1988: 392.

³ The issue is in fact more nuanced than this simplistic formulation. See Chapter I, section (i).

that war would not occur because “war does not pay”. This “abstract rationalism”, Carr condemned, was one of the “foundation-stones” underlying the “liberal creed” of Alfred Zimmern and Arnold Toynbee, the animated supporters of the League of Nations.⁴ Hans Morgenthau, in his *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (1946), declaimed no less forcefully the belief in “liberal rationality”, a “Rationalism” characterized by its profound misunderstanding of “the nature of man”, “the nature of the social world”, and “the nature of reason itself”.⁵ The old Liberals, nevertheless, thought the very opposite. Alfred Zimmern, for one instance, expressed in his *Europe in Convalescence* (1922) the view that “politics are but the outward and oversimplified expression of deep lying passions and traditions which have not yet been touched and transfigured by the harmonizing power of human reason”.⁶ Had men become more rational, and had ridded themselves of the “powerful forces of interest, conviction, prejudice, passion, [that] stood in the way”, as Norman Angell proclaimed in his revised edition of *The Great Illusion – Now* (1938),⁷ conflict could have been reconciled by rational argumentation, and war replaced by peaceful change.

The second impact of Keohane’s address was its raising of the significance of and unprecedented contestations over the term of rationality. For the scholars subscribing to Keohane’s Rationalism, the concept of rationality hallmarked one of the “analytical foundations” or the “final strategy” for upholding mainstream theories.⁸ For those who propose to make further innovations such as Helen Milner and Peter Katzenstein, the concept formed the starting point that needed only elevation by incorporating domestic and cultural variables into the framework.⁹ Some Reflectivists, like Alker, wanted to “rescue ‘reason’ from the ‘rationalists,’” by having conceptions in a different direction.¹⁰ Still, other Reflectivists, who embraced the dichotomization and determined to be

⁴ Carr 1939: 27-8, 30.

⁵ Morgenthau 1946a: 5, 122, 153, 168, 204.

⁶ Zimmern 1922: 146-7.

⁷ Angell 1938: 17.

⁸ Keohane 1986: 163, Ruggie 1998: 9, Donnelly 2000: 64.

⁹ See Chapter II, section (iii).

¹⁰ Alker 1990.

“dissidents”, regarded the concept as the cardinal vice, undertaking what Waever called a “flanking operation” against the Rationalistic core to remove the term with Rationalism altogether.¹¹ “The methodological prescription of the utilitarian rationalists”, R.B.J. Walker announced, should never be “treated as the successful orthodoxy on whose terms the contributions of the reflective school should be judged”.¹² “If one is to find a ‘genuine research program’”, Der Derian remarked, “it is better to take the enlightened road of rationalist reflection than the benighted wood of poststructuralist reflectivity”.¹³ In the years following Keohane’s address, rationality indeed became a touchstone, or perhaps *the* intellectual compass to chart one’s direction and define one’s location. With the occurrence of the “Third Debate”,¹⁴ the concept of rationality was further turned into a battlefield over which many theoretical forces strive. (Nowadays, even after twenty years, Anglophone IR textbooks still tell the reader that “modern and post-modern critical theorists stood united against the dominant rationalistic theories”, or that “empirical and analytical feminist approaches challenge given ways of thinking about and doing International Relations, especially dominant rationalist approaches”.¹⁵)

It is the unanticipated end of the Cold War in 1991 that gives a fatal blow to the Rationalists. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, only three years after Keohane’s address, was for Reflectivists a demonstration of the Rationalist fiasco in tackling the problem of change in politics. As the Rationalists were undermined, the Reflectivists (or some of them) advanced rapidly to seize the fronts left by the fallen Rationalists. Although some wanted to retain the significance of the concept of rationality,¹⁶ many had regarded it as the ultimate cause of materialistic, static, and individualistic, pathologies. Ruggie criticized “Neoutilitarianism” for assuming “that the identities and interests of states are given, *a priori* and exogenously”, which were too narrowly “defined in such materials terms as power, security, and

¹¹ See the Special Issue in *International Studies Quarterly* 1990, Waever 1996: 165.

¹² Walker 1992: 85.

¹³ Der Derian 1992: 8.

¹⁴ Lapid 1989.

¹⁵ Reus-Smit 2009: 217, True 2009: 257.

¹⁶ See Chapter III, section (iii), on K.M. Fierke’s idea of rationality.

welfare”.¹⁷ “Rational-choice” viewed “that interaction does not change identities and interests”, Alexander Wendt wrote.¹⁸ “It seems to me”, as Kratochwil once remarked, that far from “simply adding auxiliary assumptions [to utilitarian Rationalism]” the study of international relations “requires the change from a *homo economicus* model of action to one of a *homo sociologicus*”.¹⁹ Within this “Constructivist Turn” in Anglophone IR, the concepts of rationality, Rationalism, and *homo economicus* which Keohane had claimed as the undergirding a distinct research program, soon experienced its abandonment and downfall.²⁰

From 1991 to 1999, Anglophone IR witnessed such a rapid growth of Constructivism that it soon established itself as one of the three main paradigms. Yet, although some Constructivist scholars were zealous to announce the “strange death of liberal international theory”,²¹ the issue of rationality was once again revived by a sway of “Habermasian” theorizations when entering into the second millennium. For scholars like Thomas Risse and Harald Muller, the issues were twofold. First, Constructivism could not dispense with the notion of rationality, but instead presupposed the “logic of appropriateness” as an alternative conception. Second, what the Constructivists failed to explain – how cultures and norms originated as the consensus reached by unmute agents in the first place – could be expounded by Habermas’ theory of “communicative rationality”.²² With the continuous flow of Habermas into IR, it seems that Constructivism is giving away to this revived theory of another rationality.

Now looking back over the Anglophone disciplinary history, a quarter of century after Keohane’s presidential speech, “Rationalism” has experienced more vicissitudes than dominance: its momentary reign was soon followed by its downfall with the collapse of the Cold War, by its renunciation by the Constructivists within the first Post-Cold War period, and by the resurgence of

¹⁷ Ruggie 1998: 9.

¹⁸ Wendt 1995: 426.

¹⁹ Kratochwil 2007: 44.

²⁰ This is the standard account of how the constructivist turn occurred. I argue in Chapter II, section (iii), however, that the rationalistic theories live much longer, and have a stronger life, than commonly claimed.

²¹ Reus-Smit 2001.

²² Risse 2000.

significance of the concept in a communicative manner after 2000. These developments, indeed, had rendered Keohane's claim blurry, remote, and somehow fanciful. But for those who study Anglophone IR from a perspective of intellectual history, Keohane's announcement precisely commenced the formation of three historical puzzles since his proclamation of the Rationalism/Reflectivism bifurcation in 1988.

The first puzzle, persisted under these swift changes, is how is Keohane's *Rationalism* possible? From his influential essay "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond" (1983) to the presidential address,²³ Keohane had asserted the supremacy of this monolithic Rationalism. Yet, is Morgenthau, a fervent critique of assuming states "playing games of military and diplomatic chess according to a rational calculus that exists nowhere but in the theoretician's mind", a Rationalist as Keohane depicts? Why does Waltz constantly clarify that "the theory requires no assumptions of rationality or of constancy of will on the part of all of the actors"?²⁴ Is Keohane's claim of a monolithic idea of rationality that not only includes Thucydides and Waltz, Morgenthau and Keohane historically, but unifies Neorealism and Neoliberalism theoretically, accurate? Is Keohane's claim that Rationalism monopolizes the realm of reason, a claim widely accepted by the Reflectivists and dismissed by the Constructivist, still valuable for a reconsideration today?

Second, what do IR scholars mean by "reason", "rationality" and "Rationalism"? What is the relation between Keohane's Rationalism and the "Rationalism" condemned by Carr and Morgenthau, when both are seen to be liberal? What is the "Rationalism" celebrated by one of the most prominent British thinkers Martin Wight? Is there any association between Keohane's conception of rationality and that of the earlier Deterrence Theorists', such as Thomas Schelling's? The "reflectivist" Richard Ashley once advocated "practical reason", which he considered as partially embodied in Morgenthau's work – is this simultaneously related to "argumentative rationality" which is also inspired by Habermas' theory?

²³ Keohane 1983.

²⁴ Morgenthau 1967a: 244, Waltz 1979: 118.

Do they all presume the same account of reason? Is David Boucher's articulation of a mode of action bearing the name of "historical reason", similar to Christian Reus-Smit's conception that "rationality is historically and culturally contingent"?

Third, what is the role played by rationality within the whole IR discursive community in history? If so many Anglophone IR scholars have appealed to reason, rationality and rationalism in their various conceptions, then for what purpose does they deploy the term? Why do they want to have different conceptions? Does an alternative conception imply a contestation over a crucial theoretical and political issue? Is the "language of reason" descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, or prescriptive for a certain type of conduct? Does the term empower, constrain, dismay, or arrogate, the thinkers to perform an act?

All the foregoing questions, indeed, are pointing to the ultimate problem. *How has rationality been conceived and applied by Anglophone IR thinkers?* While rationality was, is, and will perhaps remain one of the master concepts underlying IR discourse, there is as yet no comprehensive exposition of the various conceptions and applications of the term.

(ii) Methodology

In order to answer the above kind of question, four methodological approaches invite exploitation.²⁵ The first approach, exemplified in Stephen Hobden's study *International Relations and Historical Sociology* (1998), Colin Wight's *Agents, Structures and International Relations* (2006), and Milja Kurki's *Causation in International Relations* (2008),²⁶ is transcendently analytical. To be *transcendentally* analytical requires an expedition into the fields other than IR to expropriate some canonically modeled conceptualization, either of "international system" from historical sociology, or of "structure" from sociology, or of "causation" from philosophy of the social sciences. Then by matching these exterior

²⁵ These four approaches are idealized types for heuristic discussion here. Some can be a mixture and thus extrusion of my taxonomy, for instance, J.A. Vasquez's *The War Puzzle* (1993).

²⁶ Hobden 1998, C. Wight 2006, Kurki 2008.

exemplars with IR scholars' own conceptions, the analyst will compare, differentiate, categorize, and appraise, the IR conceptions in distance from the exemplars. A better idea of Mann's conceptualization of international system will enhance clarity. The less distant from Aristotle's four conceptions of causes, the more enlightening theory will become for analysis. The whole purpose of such an enterprise is to sharpen IR scholar's conceptions in light of, and benchmark their bewildering conceptions against, an externally established standardized conceptualization.

The second approach, instantiated in John Hobson's *State in International Relations* (1998) and Richard Little's *Balance of Power in International Relations* (2007),²⁷ is immanently analytical. Rather than intruding into other disciplines, it accumulates inductively how scholars have already conceived of "state" and "balance of power" *within* IR. Then by making an immanent comparison – a two-multiplies-two taxonomy of the conceptions of states or models of balance of power in Morgenthau, Bull and Waltz's theory – the immanent analyst wants not as much to correct the conceptions as to map each theorists' position on a scale generated internally from within IR. Although the starting point is not transcendent, the immanent analysts still share the transcendent analysts' assumption in regarding conceptions of "war", "state" and "balance of power" as possessing some independent theoretical existence, as if all the theorists had been using these concepts in the same way to address the same problem.

The third approach, employed by Fred Halliday in his *Revolution in World Politics* (1999), Barry Buzan and Richard Little in their *International System in World History* (2001),²⁸ is transcendentally historical. It intends to bring the same effect as, but begin with a distinct starting point from, the first transcendent approach. Like the first approach that proposes to sharpen and enrich concepts against an external standard, a transcendent-historical method also wants IR scholars' conceptions of "revolution" and "international system" to be improved, escaping from the ignorance of revolutionary force in shaping world politics and

²⁷ Hobson 1998, Little 2007.

²⁸ Halliday 1999, Buzan and Little 2001.

breaking off the confinement of the Westphalian model. Yet, unlike the first (and also the second since both are analytical), the transcendent historicists' measuring rod is not social theory but world history. The analytical concepts will be tested, refined, and reformulated, in light of the events which occurred in the past and which are concrete and complex.

The fourth approach, exercised by Duncan Bell and Lucian Ashworth in their articles on disciplinary history, is immanently historical.²⁹ To be immanently *historical* is to understand the IR concepts within a particularly spatial-temporal context, either of thoughts or of events, rather than to view them as mere analytical lenses. To be *immanently* historical is to use history for comprehending some concepts within a field for their own sake, or to understand the whole field in which they operate, rather than for transcendentally testing their strength in the database of history. An immanent historicist, therefore, will endeavor to penetratingly understand how IR scholars have conceived of the "state" and "international" as embedded within a broad intellectual/international background. Such a method, as Ashworth puts it, demands an "Auto-history".³⁰ Notice that the "immanent historicist" I identified is *not* equivalent to the famous "internalist history" pursued by Brian Schmidt in *The Political Discourse of Anarchy* (1998).³¹ In appearance, there is no distinction between being immanent within and being internal to a discourse. Yet in essence, my "immanent" approach means keeping close to what the IR scholars *themselves* see in their works – they may designate concepts which are as highly political as academic in origin and in purpose, depending on *their* conceptions – while Schmidt confines "internalist" to "academic"/"disciplinary" considerations and downplays the influences of the "exogenous events" on concepts.³² Both want to understand from within, but the

²⁹ Bell 2002, 2009.

³⁰ Ashworth 2006: 291

³¹ Schmidt 1998: 15ff.

³² Schmidt (1998: 1, 11, 37-8) is satisfied to show IR as an "academic" discourse or as "a subfield of American political science". I disagree, and my favorite counter example is the "idealists" during the Anglophone IR in infancy. Arnold Toynbee (historian), Norman Angell (public intellectual), Robert Cecil (aristocrat and politician), Leonard Woolf (Fabian socialist and writer), Gilbert Murray (poet and writer), H.G. Wells (novelist), J.M. Keynes (economist) and Bertrand Russell (aristocrat and professor of logics and philosophy) – did they write simply for Schmidt's "internal" purpose? Schmidt overlooks the fact that a discipline like IR is constantly changing in its purpose, organization, intellectual orientation, etc., which renders any attempt to equate "internalist" with "academic" narrowly-focused.

immanent-historicist wants to be internal to the field *not* by insulating it from external events but by revolving a range of international, intellectual, and institutional (disciplinary) contexts around the same, central, concept as long as the latter can be illuminatingly understood through the former.

Following Ashworth and Bell, I propose to undertake an immanent-historical study of the concept of rationality. Five methodological principles are devised for its operation. First is the principle of being *immanently* historical. Rather than standing outside, categorizing and correcting IR scholars' conceptions of reason by such externalist measurement as philosophy or social theory or history, I want to immerse discussion in the IR discourse, grasping these conceptions as part of a language that has a logic of its own. As an immanent historicist, my principal task is *not* to seek for a "better" or the "true" conceptualization of reason, confirming or refuting them against a historical background. Rather, I want to dwell on the existing ones, depict a wide range of them, delve into their subtle connotations and sometimes denaturalize the customary ways of looking at them. To be immanent is more than being "internalist": IR is neither a fixed entity, its boundaries enclosed, nor is the IR scholar resistant to drawing on resources outside the field or responding to political events. The background events and thoughts can be called on only in so far as they perform a service for reconstituting an IR thinker's *own* thought, promoting a comprehensive understanding of these conceptions "from within", in the same light as the IR thinkers *themselves* conceived of and deployed them.

Second, the principle of immanent *historicism* outlaws the tendency to view concepts as possessing separately ephemeral existences. In contrast to *both* kinds of analysts, the immanent historicist does not want to decipher conceptions as if they address the same theoretical problem which can be unquestionably compared on an analytical scale, as C. Wight did to structure and J.M. Hobson to state. Rather, I want to entangle with *complexity*, comparing their similarity and contrasting their differences. I want to understand how those conceptions, despite serving various purposes (either for tackling a new political problem, or pioneering

a new thinking space for research or rivaling another prevalent conception in political and theoretical debate), have all made the concept significant within the disciplinary discourse. I want to show their *diachronic and synchronic relatedness*, their variation, intersection and development across a certain time that form a story of enduring and collective importance.

Third, an immanent-historical study cannot be carried on across the whole of the changing ideas, boundaries and organization of IR, and requires some spatial-temporal qualifications. I shall begin my examination from 1919, a conventionally recognized starting point, and end with 2009, exactly nine decades later and conveniently bounding my investigation. By IR I refer specifically to Anglophone IR world.

Fourth, principles for selection are necessary even for an immanent historicist to distinguish the writers worthy of discussion within IR. My criteria of exclusion and inclusion are threefold. First, I propose to narrow down focus to those who had spoken frequently of reason, gave the dramatically classic expositions of it, and delivered conceptions that were the most widely responded to.³³ The delicate, disciplined, and systematic use of the concept is always the first choice. Second, for the scholars who did not articulate the very term but assume much about the concept, I only indicate their significance as long as they can illuminate the thinkers of the first category. For an immanently historical project, the most crucial point is to reconstitute how the thinkers *themselves* use the concept, not to interpret how they could/should have used it, however much resemblance their language may bear with the term. Third, I shall rule out any consideration of those whose use of the term is of a casual, unintentional, and occasional character. The costs of studying them will far exceed the benefits.

Notice one caveat here: the historical significance accorded to some texts may not be self-evident and sometimes demand revision. In some cases, the once classical expression of a certain conception of reason and the significance

³³ It is within the thoughts of, for instance, Alfred Zimmern, E.H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, John Herz, Richard Ashley, Thomas Schelling, Anatol Rapoport, Robert Gilpin, Robert Keohane, Andrew Moravcsik, Friedrich Kratochwil, Nicholas Onuf, Raymond Aron, Martin Wight, R.B.J. Walker, David Boucher, Andrew Linklater, and Christian Reus-Smit, than others that the concept occupies a more significant position. The list will augment in proceeding.

endowed it can be eclipsed by the course of history. For example, few nowadays discuss the Rational Deterrence Theorists who introduced the concept of utilitarian reason and rendered it predominant in IR discourse in the early 1960s. Fewer read Raymond Aron's plea for a "reasonable" diplomatic-strategic action around the same time that endeavored to reorient rationality towards a more historical-sociological and moral direction. In this situation, the immanent historicist needs to recover the significance that had once been bestowed them. In other cases, he may even reappraise the significance of a conception which had been previously evaluated on an inaccurate basis. Did Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz endorse utilitarian rationality, as Keohane proclaimed? Where is Martin Wight's Rationalism rational? These questions require an appraisal of the valuation accredited to them in the new, immanently-historical, light. It is necessary to notice, however, that this appraisal of the significance of the ascriptions made by IR scholars of others' uses of the term in light of immanent history is not for benchmarking their understandings of the term against my interpretation.

Fifth, what means can an immanent historicist deploy to pragmatically manage such a reconstruction? Indeed, the range of denotations, purposes, sources, and contexts revolving around the concept is so extensive that the method one chooses must be broadened enough to tackle all these complexities. For Zimmern and Morgenthau to be rational is to control man's passions, while for Kratochwil and Fierke, it is rule-following. For Gilpin "rationality is not historically and culturally bound", but for Reus-Smit, it is "culturally and historically contingent form of consciousness".³⁴ For Morgenthau it is employed for articulating a voice about the conduct of American foreign policy, for Ashley, academic theorization. Morgenthau and Aron are influenced by Weber's as well as Clausewitz's thoughts of rationality in sociology and strategy, Schelling and Snyder by Game Theory, Onuf, Kratochwil and Fierke by Wittgenstein's "language games", Linklater, Muller and Risse by Habermas' communicative-rational theory. For Herz to speak of

³⁴ Reus-Smit 1999: 161.

rationality might be an indication of the naïveté of thought, but for Schelling, Kahn and Morgenstern, it is an organized activity to elevate policy design into a science.

My answer is to learn from J.G.A. Pocock, and to view all these IR scholars as speaking of the “language of reason” and forming a “discursive community of rationality”.³⁵ Notice that I merely want to *learn* from Pocock. I do *not* claim to make a methodological innovation by showing how Pocock’s own method can necessarily bring out something new. Rather, I endeavor to use his method as an informatively heuristic device for making explicit what is already there.

For Pocock, a language refers to a grammatically and syntactically coherent, stable, and relatively discrete mode of communication. These properties endow meaning on a term by embedding it within a special, grammatical, position in relation to a range of other terms, which is revealed either by IR thinkers themselves or by later reconstruction.³⁶ Later on I argue there are four languages of IR within which reason can be seen to have distinct meanings – or four languages of reason – but suffice it here to notice three points. First, the various languages of reason, although sharing the same term reason, can structure the term in such a distinct way that even if they speak of the same term, what they mean by uttering the term can be drastically different. Second, by contrast, the terms serving as grammatical frame of reference can also be frequently shared by two or more languages: “game”, for instance, is shared by Game Theory and Wittgenstein’s language games but can point to different notions of rationality (and of game). It is on this account that a language, although discernible, may sometimes sounds alien from and sometimes similar to the rest. Finally, the intimate associations among the languages may cause difficulty in pigeonholing one thinkers’ conception. Linklater, for instance, is identified here as speaking in a Kantian language, but in his utterances one can find expressions of historical

³⁵ Pocock 1981, 1987.

³⁶ Notice the distinction between a language with languages and a “tradition”: (1) a language of reason is one small portion of a thinker’s vocabulary that stands equally with many others (bottom-up), whereas a tradition is a hierarchically grand, broadly inclusive, categorization (up-bottom). (2) a language is something that has been really uttered, discernible by an empirical searching process of “look and see”, whereas a tradition can often be claimed to embody or finds representation in a thinker’s thought. (3) a language with different languages are interpenetrating, whereas a tradition seems to be exclusive, self-closed, and autonomous.

rationality. In this case, I shall concentrate on the most salient feature – the dominant, unique and defining trait – while at the same time indicating the other possibilities.

It is this conceptualization of language of reason that Pocock's method gains two particular merits. First, Pocock's lens of "language" can present an extremely vivid, precise and nuanced picture. Given the centrality of "reason" for IR thinkers, their different conceptions of reason can justify them being regarded as speaking different languages of reason. They can be viewed as deploying the same term in a particular way that sometimes disassociates and sometimes associates it with other languages; in a special tone that may be exhortative, presumptive, rhetorical or prosaic; with distinct styles that may be overtly accessible or idiosyncratic; for a variety of purposes that may be political, academic, or dialogic. Better than Skinner's intentionalism and Foucault's genealogy,³⁷ the lens of language can accommodate such complexities because it can at the same time enlarge focus from the mere "intention" behind speech to the various ways of its performance, and does not widen it to such an extent that we lose sight of the constant and fall into shattered disparity.

Second is Pocock's insistence that the change of a language should be explained in a balanced manner. Pocock argues that the change of language must be examined as an outcome of the *inner* dynamic of a language game, a game played by the speakers who compete, supplement, and reinforce each other through pioneering distinct conceptions or developing existing ones within a community. Unlike Schmidt's "internalist" account, Pocock also stresses that the inner play of a language game is also concurrent with its *outer* play, which engages one language game with others *and* with contemporary events overshadowing the play. To undertake an immanent-historical study of a concept is not to repress the significance of one side while privileging the other. Rather, it is to broaden one's view to the twofold process, and scrupulously reconstruct how a language is changed within the interplay between the inner dimension where

³⁷ Skinner 2002: 59-67, Foucault 1971.

scholars contend about the language of reason (why a certain conception of rationality rather than another one), and the outer dimension where they address to other language speakers (why rationality rather than other terms occupies a central position) or to the political events outside with which the language is grappling, and in some cases, the statesmen whose attention they seek to attract.

These six principles may be simplified into three tenets for operational purpose. First, the thesis is indigenous in focus: it proposes to focus immanently on a field (first, third and fourth principle), and concentrates on the dynamic of an IR language (sixth principle). Second, it is comprehensive in scope: it wants systematic dissection of how IR scholars have variously conceived and applied the term (second and fourth principle). Third, it pays enormous attention to process: it show how these utterance of reason are interrelated within a certain spatial-temporal background (fifth principle).

(iii) Contributions & Chapter Outlines

By embarking on such an immanent historicist investigation, I propose to make three contributions. My first aim is to provide an auto-history of the concept of reason in Anglophone IR, and uncover the centrality of such a hidden language of reason. I want to show that the concept of reason, far from being insignificant, has constituted, undergirded, and empowered many prominent IR scholars' discourses. At the individual level, it contextually reconstitutes single thinkers' construal of reason, showing how the term stands in a central position within their main writings. The thesis thus contributes to the specialized scholarships on Hans Morgenthau, Thomas Schelling, Kenneth Waltz, Martin Wight, and others, by rediscovering the thinker's original vocabulary and restructuring the conceptual relations in their thoughts. At the communitarian level, it reconstitutes how these "speakers of reason" in IR conceive of and contend about reason, compares the resemblance (and divergence) and reconstructs the intricate purposes in deploying the term to perform such a wide range of acts as explaining, prescribing,

accusing, and extolling, political as well as intellectual conducts. Such an immanent study of the concept unravels the third puzzle that I identified: it captures only a small portion (dimension) of thought that exposes nevertheless the very discursive basis of modern international theory.

Second, I want to bring out a taxonomy of four construal of rationality. I argue that IR thinkers have spoken in four languages of reason. *Kantian reason* stands in a relation opposed to passion, emotion and instinct, and makes the stipulation that to base actions on the intellect is prerequisite for pursuing interest and moral conduct. *Utilitarian reason* refers to the maximization of interests under constraints, where interest can be defined as strategic preference, emotional attachment, or cultural value and constraints as a two-person game, uncertainty or risk. *Axiological reason* means following rules, cultures and norms, and always uses game as an analytical foundation and attends to the problem of how to enforce rules. *Historical reason* views all values as conditioned within a specific spatial-temporal background, and insists that moral problems, which are inherent in the sociological games played in the specifically chronological backgrounds, must be solved by overcoming universal morality and the unilateral pursuit of interest. Once again notice that the terms serving as grammatical frame of reference can be frequently shared by two or more language s: “interest”, “morality”, “emotion”, “culture”, and “game” (there are more such as “intellectual”, “system”, and “anarchy”).

Bringing out a taxonomy unravels the second and third puzzles. It exposes what the term exactly meant to the thinkers – not only as individuals but also as a group of thinkers. Metaphorically, with a compass having merely one utilitarian point, scholars can only know whether they are heading towards it or not. I want to replace the old conceptual compass that merely has one utilitarian point, by which scholars can only know whether they are heading towards it or not, with a new one with four directions (and degrees) that can locate conceptions on a complex scale, by which scholars can navigate their thinking in the intellectual ocean. Such a taxonomy, furthermore, provides answers to historical puzzles: it

shows that Keohane's claim of a monolithic Rationalism was due to the similarity among language s that different language s of reason can be interpreted by Keohane into a singly dominating voice of "Rationalism".

Third, such an immanent history of the concept of reason by itself contributes to the historiographical writings (or "historiographical turn"³⁸) of the discipline. It encapsulates at once an intellectual, a disciplinary, and an international, history. First, it reconstitutes the process of how IR scholars has applied the concept of reason, a concept that enables them to draw on a variety of intellectual sources such as Weber's social theory of rationality, Clausewitz's strategic thought on war as a rational instrumentality, Game Theory's assumption of commonly rational players, Wittgenstein's "language games" and rule-following rationality, and Habermas' communicative-rational theory. Second, it continues the enterprise of disciplinary historiography, but concentrates on the period after the Second World War. Further to Wilson and Ashworth's works focusing on the discipline in infancy (1919-1939), a historiography of reason reflects especially how the discipline has developed during and after the Cold War (1945-2009). It exposes the changing *purpose* of a discipline from a plea for rational discussion among nations in its infancy to a calculated management of deterrence in national security during disciplinary formation. It shows the varying *boundary* of the discipline from the study of nuclear strategy and conflict resolution to that of international institutions, legal rules, domestic cultures, and historical sociology. Third, it reverses the direction of the works by Halliday and others (the transcendent historicists),³⁹ demonstrating that international history is partly constituted in IR scholars' works. What International Relations scholars write is international relations. In short, such a history of reason exemplifies the interplay between political events, intellectual currents, and the scholars' own theorization as the very product of this interaction.

Finally, there is one contribution I may be additionally able to make: a *history* of the four language s of reason, grounded within the "historiographical turn", can

³⁸ Bell 2002; see also Vaughan-Williams 2005.

³⁹ Halliday 1994b, Hobson 2004.

by consequence elaborate the *theory* of political action for the “practical turn”.⁴⁰ Each language of reason, if variations pruned, denotations compressed and commonalities distilled, can display an essential core that amounts to a particular model of rational action. Although I shall not pursue that philosophical enterprise in this thesis, it would be better to recognize its potentially philosophical value: it must constantly resist, but is always on the verge of, becoming a philosophy of rational conduct.

In order to make explicit the individual language s but without losing sight of their interplay in the history of IR, I shall proceed in two steps. First, I provide four horizontally diachronic histories, each of which is devoted to exposing one single language along the chronological dimension. Then I conclude with a synchronic history recapitulating how the four languages interplay with each other in five different periods within the nine decades.

Chapter one addresses Kantian reason. Kantian reason is centered on the intellect. The Kantian conception stipulates that the intellect rather than passion (or desire, emotion, impulses) should be the spring of political conduct, foundation of morality, and guarantee of mutual understanding. I argue that a similar Kantian conception of reason runs through the thoughts of the English Idealists, Hans Morgenthau, Richard Ashley, Andrew Linklater, and the German Idealists from 1919 to the mid of 2000s. Starting from the “English Idealists”, I show how these Liberal Institutionalists, despite holding a pessimistic view of human nature, turn it into a political program urging the cultivation of human reason to prevent war. Then I proceed to Hans Morgenthau’s writings mainly on Realism. I contend that Morgenthau’s “rational” Realism shares much similarity with the Idealists in its emphasis on the indispensability of using intellect to discipline political conduct. I show how Morgenthau deploys the term to exhort the American statesman to use reason to designate the end of foreign policy and military strategy. Next I reconstruct the process of how Richard Ashley, by using Habermas’ idea of practical reason to revive Morgenthau’s claim that reason should be concerned

⁴⁰ See esp. Kratochwil 2011b. This contribution would reside’ at the intersection of the two “turns”.

with the end of political conduct, criticizes the Neorealists as having betrayed their tradition. Then I turn to Andrew Linklater, showing how his endeavor to use Habermas' theory of discursive ethics to recover the old Liberal Institutionalists program has succeeded in reviving the idea of reasoned dialogue in a way that narrow in scope but dynamic in degree. Finally, I examine the recently rising movement of "German Idealism", represented by Thomas Risse and Harald Muller. I contend that they have been less conscious of the similarity between their language of reason and the Liberal Institutionalists'.

By utilitarian reason is meant the maximization of interests under constraints. First of all, I examine the theories of rational deterrence and conflict resolution devised by Schelling, Rapoport, Snyder, and Kahn, and Boulding in the early 1960s. I show how they speak in the utilitarian-rational language for demonstrating by what means, in the games played by interest maximizers, the self can outmaneuver the opponent in a conflict without an actual trial of military strength, and resolve conflicts without conceding any interest to the adversary. Next I turn to the rise of Neoliberalism and Neorealism in the 1980s. First, I show how Gilpin and Bueno de Mesquita (hereafter Mesquita) uses the term to explain the occurrence of war as systematic, large-scale, conflict. Second, I show how Keohane and other Neoliberals use the concept to explain how extensively institutional cooperation can endure. Third, I expose the strategies through which Keohane absorbs the Kantian rationalists, including, notably, Morgenthau. The triumph of this second wave of the utilitarian movement faded away with the unexpected end of the Cold War. However, even after the unexpected end of the post-Cold War era, there are still many theorists, in the face of the challenges posed by the Constructivists, who endeavor to rescue utilitarian rationality by conceptualizing preference formation as conditioned by domestic culture or institution. By examining the works of Milner, Moravcsik, Jepperson, and Katzenstein, I show how they try to incorporate domestic identity and institution into the utilitarian-rational framework to strengthen the explanatory power of the utilitarian language.

Chapter three addresses axiological reason. Axiological reason defines rationality in terms of the following of exterior rules, cultures, and norms. I argue that Kenneth Waltz, Nicholas Onuf, Friedrich Kratochwil and K.M. Fierke have deployed a language of reason in the axiological accent. I begin with Kenneth Waltz, posing two contentions against the currently prevalent depiction of him as a utilitarian theorist. In Waltz's own vocabulary, the term "rationality" was a hallmark of reductionism that has to be resisted rather than embraced; Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, although in appearance speaking of a language of microeconomics, essentially utters a sociological language of game, rule, order, and imperative to show how the units are required to be axiological-rational by the international system. Then I turn to Nicholas Onuf and Friedrich Kratochwil's account of rationality as rule bounded in a game. I show how they use the lens of game to define rationality as rule-following, and their account of a particular mechanism of enforcement as intersubjective contestation. Next I proceed to K.M. Fierke's thesis that rationality should not only be designated by the game, but constantly changes in the transformation of games.

Chapter four is devoted to historical reason. Historical reason refers to a conception of rationality as immanently within or dependent on a historical-sociological-moral nexus. I argue that Raymond Aron, Martin Wight, David Boucher and Christian Reus-Smit independently develop their ideas of reason that converge nevertheless on a shared emphasis on the historical-sociological condition and moral dimension of political conduct. I begin with Raymond Aron's "reasonable" strategic-diplomatic action. I show how he views it as a way out of the bipolar and nuclear dilemma that can at the same time limit violence driven by the ideological quest for absolute justice, while make no concessions in the pursuit of interest to the opponent. I then proceed to Wight's tradition of "Rationalism". I reconstitute his definition of Rationalism as a trinity, where the view of human nature as amenable to reason engenders the view of social coexistence as possible, of history as in a constant flux, and of morality as practical in context. Next I explicate Boucher's tradition of "historical reason",

highlighting how it features in the pursuit of a middle ground between universal moral order and empirical procurement of interest. In the end, I show how Reus-Smit's thesis of "rationality as a culturally and historically contingent form of consciousness" conceptualizes rationality in terms of a constitutive value residing in the specific historical contexts that provides the moral foundation for the pursuit of interest.

In the concluding part I synthesize these four diachronic stories into a synchronic whole, signposting their interrelation within a period. I divide the disciplinary history from 1919 to 2009 into five periods. I show how in the first (1919-1939) the Kantian conception is exclusively integral to the disciplinary discourse and purpose. Then I reconstitute the interaction among the three, representative conceptions of reason by Morgenthau, deterrence theorists, Aron and Wight, from the end of the Second World War to the early Cold War period (1940-1969). Next I concentrate on the third period (1970-1979), rediscovering Waltz's idea of axiological rationality and the disciplinary responses to him, represented by Ashley's revival of Kantian reason. I then proceed to the fourth period (1980-1990) and show the prevalence of utilitarian reason represented by the Neo-Neo theories. In the end, I concentrate on the development of various conceptions from the end of the Cold War (1991) to 2009.

(iv) A Note on the Term

Anglophone IR theorists have invoked "reason", "rationality", "rational", "reasonable", and "rationalization" so frequently – or so bewilderingly in fact – that their meanings cannot be grasped without a closer investigation of their application within certain concrete contexts. Suffice it here to notice two points. First, before the entrance of Game Theory and Rational Choice Theory into IR around the 1950s, most IR thinkers used "reason", and since then, "rationality". Second, the use and meaning of "reason" has more variations than "rationality". It can be used as a singular noun denoting human beings' intellectual faculty, or a plural noun (reasons) referring to the motive or aim for undertaking a certain

action,⁴¹ or an adjective (*reasoned*) indicating an attribute, or a verb (*reasoning*) meaning the process or of inference and deliberation. Rational (or reasonable) are limited in this aspect, serving only as adjective.

⁴¹ Esler 2009.

Chapter I. Kantian Reason

The language of Kantian reason has three characteristics. First, reason is centered on the human intellect. The Kantian conception of reason regards human intellect as the source of calm, order, essence and intelligibility, which stands in opposition to the natural properties of emotion, passion, instinct, lust, appearance and experience that manifest phenomenally as the blind, violent, and meaningless contingency. For Kantian reason, the cognitive faculty is the most powerful capacity that should be used. The actors should surpass their emotions, instincts and impulses by the discipline of the intellect, and subordinate facts and experiences to intellectual understanding. The first definition of Kantian reason is also Kant's conception of reason.¹

Second, the Kantian conception of reason often draws a line between the objective and (inter)subjective use of reason. In the agents' action towards *object* – or nature, environment, political reality, events – the intellect can enable the agent to penetrate into the surface of appearance, exercise intelligible control over reality, and designate the end of conduct and the most economic means for achieving the objective. In the agents' action towards another *subject* (each other), the cognitive associates them together and forges dialogue and mutual understanding among peoples or between the political actor and observer. Notice that although scholars sometimes disagree about the relation between the two uses of reason – Morgenthau sees it as a conceptual division whereas Ashley argues in favor of an ontological division; Zimmern considers the two to be mutually constitutive whereas Ashley argue that they are incompatible² – they acknowledge that there is an important

¹ Kant 1784: 42 ff.

² The center of dispute is whether human beings can be the object of the instrumental use of reason. See more details below.

division between the two uses of reason. My second definition is larger than Kant's own. Reason can make understanding possible (Kant's reason), and pierce into the essence of objects (more powerful than Kant's reason which cannot penetrate into thing-in-themselves); reason *can* be used as an efficient instrument (*pace* Kant) with a view of promoting the ultimate end (Kant's).³

Third, the Kantian conception of reason stipulates that political conduct, which should be grounded on an intellectual rather than passionate basis, is crucial for the pursuit of *interest* as well as of *morality*. The pursuit of interest requires a rational agent to harness passions, emotions, and impulses by the discipline of the intellect. This emphasis on the intellectual pursuit of interest has often incurred misunderstanding since the utilitarian language also deploys a notion of "interest" (I shall explicate the resemblance and difference in the next chapter). What makes Kantian reason distinct from the utilitarian counterpart is that the Kantian conception has a special concern with the *end* of political conduct, always carrying within itself a preoccupation with the ultimate destiny of action and an exhortation that the means should be adapted to ends. Furthermore, it regards the act performed on an intellectual basis as the morally good and ethically right. To ground action in the intellect is at once necessary for defending political interests and complying with moral precepts. The Kantian conception of reason in my definition is at once Kant's and not his: it is highly concerned with the end of conduct but does not exclude the consequentialist value of reason, and it is further away from moral conduct (unlike Brown's and Hutchings' usage) and more oriented towards interest.⁴

Within IR many thinkers have spoken of a language .of Kantian reason, and they generally fall into three interrelated groups – the British Liberal Institutionalists, the Cold War Realists, and the scholars such as Ashley and Linklater who draw on Habermas' theory of communicative rationality.

³ Kant 1781: 124 (A 90), 1785: 35ff.

⁴ See Brown 1992: 27-41 and Hutchings 1996.

The first is the British liberal-institutionalists in the interwar period, commonly known as the “Idealists”.⁵ In section (i), I shall reexamine the “Idealist” movement, showing how the Kantian conception of reason plays a crucial role in the Liberal Institutionalists’ discourse, but in a way that differentiates it both from the conventional reception and from the recent revisionist account. Conventionally, many IR scholars argue that one of the defining features of Idealism is the belief in the transforming power of human reason. Michael Cox, for instance, observed that “the utopian believed in reason, the realist in force”, and the former accordingly “assuming as they did that reason rather than material and military capabilities governed the actions of states”.⁶ Knutsen claimed that “the utopian approach to International Relations was preoccupied with finding reason-based substitutes for war”.⁷ On the other side are such revisionist scholars as Peter Wilson, Lucian Ashworth, and Casper Sylvest who deny such features of Idealism. For them, the conventionalist depiction of the naïve “Idealists” belief that violence and war can be substituted by rational discussion, legal adjudication and universal human reason, is but a “highly rhetorical devise” for defaming these thinkers. The alleged belief in reason is an insubstantial caricature, and a slurring of names defined by defects which renders the “First Great Debate” near to a myth.⁸

In section (i) I show how the Kantian conception of reason plays a crucial and sophisticated role in the discourse of the Liberal Institutionalists, which can shed new light on the controversies if viewed through another angle of the

⁵ “Idealism” and “Idealist” have a history of their own. Carr used “utopianism” (and “the utopian”) to refer to the position of his opponent, a label borrowed from Karl Mannheim’s *Ideology and Utopia* (1936). It is not accurate to say that utopianism is just “Carr’s preferred term” and “the frequent substitution of the term [idealism]” (Ashworth 2006: 293). Carr (1939: 15) did use the term “Idealism” in his work, but referring to the epistemological theory that reality depends on the perception of the human mind. The award for popularizing the term “Idealism”, which replaced “Utopianism”, should be given to Herz’s *Political Realism and Political Idealism* (1951) which include a broad range thinkers such as Mazzini and the Socialists. In recent revisionist studies on the First Debate, Long and Wilson (1996) recognize that the label “Idealists” has been extended to cover more than the usual figures (from Woodrow Wilson, Lord Cecil, Norman Angell, Alfred Zimmern, and Arnold Toynbee to Leonard Woolf, J.A. Hobson, J.M. Kenyes, Gilbert Murray and David Mitrany, who were only implicitly criticized by Carr. Ashworth further (2006) included H.N. Brailsford and Philip Noel-Baker.

⁶ M. Cox 2001: xxi-xxii.

⁷ Knutsen 1997: 216.

⁸ Wilson 1998: esp. 11, Sylvest 2005, Ashworth 2006, “a slurring of names” came from Bull 1969.

concept of reason. I start from a brief survey of some leading Liberal Institutionalists' postwar works such as Hobson's *Problems of a New World* (1920) and Alfred Zimmern's *Europe in Convalescence* (1922). I show that the Liberal Institutionalists are precisely those who do *not* believe that man has been rational enough to overcome his passions. In contrast to the conventional depiction, many Liberal Institutionalists displayed a profoundly pessimistic view of human nature, sharing a position much close to the one held by the Cold War Realists (Morgenthau, Herz and Kennan). Nevertheless, these Liberal Institutionalists, despite sharing with the Cold War Realists an assumption of the past failings of human nature, still expect that through cultivating his reason man can overcome passions and prevent another Great War. In a sharp contrast to the revisionist reading, the "Idealists" *do* have a common core: it is their deployment of Kantian language of reason as a politically activist weapon for exhorting man to become rational. First, war could be prevented if man used his intellectual faculty to understand the international problems, to verbalize ("hue and cry") what they think as the voice of reason, and use persuasion to reach peaceful consensus. Second, education and the cultivation of human reason may repress man's combative impulses. Third, I expound Zimmern's thought as an example to show his exhortation that the intellectuals (scholars) should devote their expert knowledge to promoting the peoples' "international intellectual understanding" and to strengthening statesman's leadership in making peaceful cooperation. A reexamination of the discipline's infancy shows how the term of reason was integral to IR: it not only occupied a central position in the disciplinary discourse but also provided one of the most inspiring purposes for creating the discipline.

A reengagement with the work of the British Liberal Institutionalists simultaneously paves the way for a reappraisal of the role that reason played in the Cold War Realist discourse. According to the traditional IR historiography, the ultimate failure of the "Idealists" in their combat with the "Revolt against

Reason” (a term coined by Russell),⁹ gave rise to an intellectual movement under the name of “Realism” in the 1940s and 1950s to crusade the belief in human reason. Hans Morgenthau, John Herz, and George Kennan are claimed to have completely repudiated the confidence in reason, superseding the old program with fundamentally different theoretical basis such as *animus dominandi* and accomplishing the first “paradigm” shift.¹⁰

In section (ii), I use Hans Morgenthau, perhaps the most recognized hard-headed Realist, to show that this foremost Realist thinker not only closely resembles the Liberal Institutionalists in his conception of reason, but also considers that despite their distrust of the performance of reason in practical human conduct, the role played by reason in politics *should* be enlarged. Notice the complexity of Morgenthau’s conception of reason. It has been well known that many Realist thinkers, shaped by the tragic events of the interwar period, do not believe that reason can control human action. What I want to disclose is another dimension of their conceptions of reason. These Realists (Morgenthau as one representative), in spite of the traumatic experience of the irrationalism of Fascism, still display considerable belief in reason and exhort reason to overcome passion in political conduct. Their tensional or antinomic position towards the Kantian idea of reason leads them to argue that reason should discipline, but can never determine, the use of political power.¹¹

In section (ii) I expose how Morgenthau, like the Liberal Institutionalists, exhorts that reason should designate the ends and means of the conduct of American foreign policy. I retrace Morgenthau’s successive intellectual steps from his *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (1946) through *In Defense of the National Interest* (1951) and the several editions of *Politics among Nations* (1954 contained the first statement of “Six Principles of Realism”), to his critique

⁹ Russell 1935.

¹⁰ See e.g. Vasquez 1983: Ch.2.

¹¹ Many Realists want a reconstruction rather than repudiation of Kantian reason. Politics constitutes a paradoxical sphere that should be subjected to, even though it can never be determined by, the sway and scrutiny of reason. Morgenthau 1962a: 309-10.

of the rational deterrence theorists in the 1960s. On these different occasions, I argue, Morgenthau has frequently spoken of the term reason in a manner that closely resembles the Liberal Institutionalists such as Zimmern. The theory and practice of politics, for Morgenthau, should be subjected to the designation of the intellect. Theoretically, the use of reason towards objects can penetrate into the mass of events and reveal the essence of politics; the intellect links scholarship and statesmanship together, making it possible for political observers to intersubjectively understand the political actors' conducts. Practically, it is reason, not emotion or passion, that should designate the end and means of foreign policy and military strategy, where a decision based on intellectual contemplation is the one that complies with moral precepts.

Indeed, for quite a long time, IR scholars have been perplexed by Morgenthau's idea of reason. Many of them have even been confused, for instance, by Morgenthau's principles of Realism which advocate for a "rational" theory of Realism.¹² For Robert Tucker, Morgenthau's attempt at a "rational" theory of realism is a stark contradiction with Morgenthau's previous acknowledgement of the impacts of the *animus dominandi* on politics. For Waltz Morgenthau's rational Realism presents merely a picture of instrumental pursuit of power where "Morgenthau thought of the 'rational' statesman as striving ever to accumulate more and more power". For Keohane, similarly, Morgenthau's conception of rationality is "standard in neoclassical economics".¹³ By reconstituting Morgenthau's language of reason, I show how he conceives of reason as an intellectual faculty to discipline the lust for power, and accordingly urges that the Americans should primarily use reason to designate not only means but also the *end* of foreign policy and military strategy.

With the rise of rational deterrence theories in the 1960s and the establishment of the Neo-Neo supremacy in the 1980s, the Kantian conception

¹² For Williams (2005: 107), the principles of Realism even is "perhaps the most oft-quoted phrase in the history of International Relations"!

¹³ Tucker 1952, Waltz 2008: 56, Keohane 1986: 145-7.

experienced its decline, and the utilitarian notion became prevalent. Yet, from 1981 onwards, the Kantian conception was given a new lease of life by Habermas' theory of communicative rationality. In section (iii), I shall examine the last group that contains two individual scholars, and one intellectual movement called "German Idealism",¹⁴ which runs through the decades from 1981 to 2001.

The first scholar in this group is the "early" Richard Ashley and his works such as "Political Realism and Human Interest" (1981), "Three Modes of Economicism" (1983), and "The Poverty of Neorealism" (1984). I show in all these articles that Ashley uses Habermas' practical reason to revive Morgenthau's Kantian conception of reason, particularly Morgenthau's claim that reason should be concerned with the end of political action and that the intellect forges an intersubjective/dialogic link between the scholar and statesman. These articles composed by early Ashley have become generally well-known for heralding the Critical IR Theory movement. What I want to uncover in detail is how Ashley articulates his critical voice by reprimanding the later *Neorealists* for their betrayal of the practical idea of reason laid down by Morgenthau. They should have, Ashley argued, been concerned with the end of using reason rather than merely the means, and constructed theory as a hermeneutic dialogue between scholar and statesman rather than as a positivistic explanation.

Whereas Ashley used Habermas' theory of rationality to revive Morgenthau's or classical Realist's conception of reason (especially the intersubjective part), Andrew Linklater, finding Ashley's use of Habermas inspiring, also used discursive ethics for "recovering the old idealist program".¹⁵ In *The Transformation of Political Community* (1998), a monograph sparking debate documented as a major event in the development of normative IR theory,¹⁶

¹⁴ Coined by Steffek 2010.

¹⁵ Linklater 1992: 98.

¹⁶ See the forum in *Review of International Studies* 1999; see also Brown 2000: 60, Rengger and Thirkell-White 2007: 11.

Linklater argued for “a rational morality with universal significance”, a “higher rationality of efforts to bridge the gulf between actuality and potentiality”.¹⁷ What is this *rational* morality with universal significance, and to what extent has it recovered the British Liberal Institutionalists’ program? I provide an appraisal: compared with the project envisaged by the Liberal Institutionalists, Linklater’s dialogic ethics narrows the scope of how the Kantian reason can function in some aspects – dialogic ethics relying heavily on intersubjective dialogue while overlooking the individual cultivation of reason – but enhances reason’s dynamic and intensive degree because of the dialogic encounter between people.

Finally, turning to the recent works by the “German Idealists” represented by Thomas Risse and Harald Muller, I briefly show the unrecognized but remarkable resemblance in the language spoken by the German Idealists and their English forebears. I expose the similarity between the Kantian conception of reason held by the British Liberal Institutionalists and the communicative rationality deployed by the German successors.

(i) The English Idealists and the “Revolt against Reason”: 1919-1939

“The Great War” and the “Climate of Opinion”

The First World War stunned many later called “Idealist” thinkers. Its outbreak as a “Great War”, like a suddenly natural calamity, demonstrated to them that the belief in the power of reason, a feature that pervaded the prewar period, had been misplaced. J.A. Hobson, for instance, began his *Problems of a New World* (1921) with a condemnation of the prewar people’s “faith in reason”. This belief in reason “with the fervor of religious zeal” assumed “first, that reason was by right, and in fact, the supreme arbiter in human conduct; and second, that a complete harmony of human relations was discoverable and attainable

¹⁷ Linklater 1992: 98.

by getting reason to prevail”.¹⁸ Like Hobson, Norman Angell opened his *Fruits of Victory* (1921) with the following statement: “Underlying the disruptive processes so evidently at work—especially in the international field—is the deep-rooted instinct to the assertion of domination, preponderant power”.¹⁹ Man, far from acting on reason, is always “a fighting animal, emotional, passionate”. “It is so important to establish some international organization”, Angell continued to caution in *Human Nature and the Peace Problem* (1925), “for the proper discipline of unruly instincts”.²⁰ Alfred Zimmern, in his *Europe in Convalescence* (1922), criticized the naïve belief in the rationality of human conduct:

“The deepest issues which arise between nation and nation, race and race, as between individual men and women, transcend the power of judge and court, of rule and precedent, to determine. This is not to decry the prestige or authority of the new creation...but only to remind the idealists, always apt to court disillusionment by pitching their concrete expectations too high, that politics are but the outward and oversimplified expression of deep lying passions and traditions which have not yet been touched and transfigured by the harmonizing power of human reason”.²¹

For Zimmern, as for Hobson and Angell, the prewar “Idealists” had placed too much confidence in the reason of man; their optimism towards reason, progress, and the future was tantamount to a superstition. The Great War, indeed, is not only a demonstration of the inadequacy of human reason to harness the passions, but also itself an event which unleashed the fighting, animal, instincts. Arnold Toynbee was later to bemoan in 1926 that the peace settlement after the war had been gravely endangered by the fact that “all parties had been penetrated by the war spirit”. The popular movements for reinvestigating the

¹⁸ J.A. Hobson 1921: 6.

¹⁹ Angell 1921: vii

²⁰ Angell 1925: 7.

²¹ Zimmern 1922: 146-7.

cause of war were “essentially irrational”, dominated by “violent reaction” to the self-repression and suffering during the war.²² In 1936 Zimmern recounted “the shock of 1914 and the following years” that created in the postwar generation “an atmosphere of dull anxiety, of feverish suspicion, of relentless inquisitiveness.”²³

The British Liberal Internationalists, far from being idealistic about human nature, regard themselves as realistic. And they are. Zimmern, in his works spanning the interwar period, has constantly reminded the “Idealists” of these obstacles standing in the way of reason.²⁴ However, if they are aware that human action is always led by instincts, emotions and the lust for domination – in contrast to the naiveté commonly ascribed to them – then why is the term later turned against them (by thinkers such as E.H. Carr)?

The answer lies in their recipe given to the prewar overconfidence in human reason. For those who went through the Anglo-German navy race, the overconfidence in human reason should be corrected by building up Britain’s power.²⁵ Human reason may or may not triumph over the deep lying passions, but to retain great power is warranted. The Liberal-Internationalists’ answers are diametrically opposed. For them, the prewar “Idealism” is prematurely erroneous not because the belief that man is rational is wrong, but because the belief that man has been rational enough *already* has been proven to be false. Had people not been overoptimistic with regards to their rationality, the tragedy of the war could have been prevented. The crux, therefore, is to cultivate reason, to create the conditions for reason to develop. Hobson proclaimed that “reason

²² Toynbee 1926: 1-2, 90-1.

²³ Zimmern 1936: 484-5.

²⁴ See e.g. Zimmern 1923: 211, where he criticized “the thoughtless idealistic phrase-making”, 1931. Zimmern refers to those who believes man as having possessed rationality to overcome his passions.

²⁵ Martin Wight (1957-60: 170) cited a lively exchange in his lectures: “‘There is one just way [stated Winston Churchill] in which you can make you country secure and have peace, and that is to be so much stronger than any prospective enemy that he dare not attack you, and this is, I submit to you gentlemen, a self-evident proposition.’ A small man [Norman Angell] got up at the back of the hall and said: ‘Is the advice you have just given us advice you would give to Germany?’ [a faint titter]...When the time came for questions and comment, the small man said: ‘Our Cabinet Minister tells us in the profundity of his wisdom, that both groups of quarrelling nations will be secure, both will keep the peace, when each is stronger than the other. And this, he thinks, is a self-evident proposition.’ [Loud applause]”.

points to economic order, democracy and internationalism, to a pacific settlement of the conflicts". Conversely the Great War demonstrated "the cowardly betrayal of reason and right" that "right and reason are discredited, their moral and intellectual stock is low". Force had invaded the terrain of education.²⁶

It is on the basis of this diagnosis that the ideal of the Kantian-rational man became one of the bedrock foundations of the Idealist program. Underlying their concern was a threefold exhortation for political engagement (commitment). Indeed, when the League declined in 1930, when Fascists took over Germany in 1933 and the prospect of peace subsequently deteriorated after the mid-1930s, they acted with increasing urgency to advocate the three rational ways to promote peace.

The first way is to use persuasion and public opinion to prevent the employment of violence. Here, reason can generate peace through two mechanisms. One is that analogous to the parliamentary debate within states, where political disputes are solved by argumentation and dialogue. To the same extent, states in the international arena should resolve their conflicts by using verbal debate rather than force. To supersede violence is to open dialogue with different nationals and be prepared to be persuaded. Just as within the democratic community man "must have recourse to reason and discussion" and "is precluded from employing forcible means", as explained by David Davies in *Force* (1933), in the international sphere "the resort to force will have been substituted for the appeal to reason".²⁷ Bertrand Russell, in "The Revolt against Reason" (1934), bemoaned that in his age politics had become deeply "anti-rational". Instead, he argued, reason should prevail in political conduct, and action relied on "persuasion rather than force" and sought to "persuade by means of argument".²⁸ "To abstain from fighting", and "to use every efforts to

²⁶ J.A. Hobson 1921: 271-2. See also Waltz 1959a: 152-3.

²⁷ Davies 1934: 23, 28.

²⁸ Russell 1934: 4.

persuade others to do likewise”, were the answers given by Russell in *Why Way to Peace?* (1936).²⁹ “The eternal struggle between reason and passion”, Davies remarked, “still holds the world in its relentless grip”:

“Recent events in every country and the proceedings at Geneva portray a sinister picture in which the forces of reason are pitted against the blind fury of the passions [...] The concept of justice [...] strives to produce a system of human relationships, founded upon righteousness, in which reason and conscience are the sole arbiters of conduct. Policy, on the other hand, is based upon selfishness. It is the product of self-interest and intolerance, and ministers to arbitrary prejudices and mystic emotions which brook no restraint.”³⁰

Angell, in *The Great Illusion – Now* (1938), proclaimed that action should be “basing the appeal upon argument and reason”, since man’s actions depended on “the way we read the facts of that situation”, which “in its turn depends upon argument, argument with ourselves or others”. Man must construct a dialogic cosmopolis to sweep away “nationalist fallacies, passions and retaliations”, and the “powerful forces of interest, conviction, prejudice, passion, [that] stood in the way”.³¹

The other mechanism is more complex. Within states the rule of law (constitution) reduces the use of violence to a minimum police function, prohibiting its private use for illegitimate purpose. Similarly states should, by analogy, subject their individual force to the rule of international law (e.g. the Covenant) and to the governance of international constitution (the League). Yet in international politics there is no correspondent mechanism of enforcement, nor can the League have such power to become a coercive world government. It is under this background that persuasion as reaching reasoned consensus

²⁹ Russell 1936: 223.

³⁰ Davies 1934: 1-2.

³¹ Angell 1938: 17, 75-6, 81, 86-99.

and “hue and cry”³² acquires its profound significance. If in the municipal terrain the “hue and cry” can expose a criminal to seizure, then the hue and cry of the people can at least highlight states’ obligation towards international law, compelling them to have a clear recognition of their legal duties.³³ Hence in order to urge states to realize their legal obligation to the maintenance of peace and subject violence to rationally legal control, the people must sound their “voices of reason”.³⁴ The league, Zimmern argued in *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law* (1936, hereafter *The League*), “is the organization of the hue and cry – and nothing more”; “without the cooperation of voluntary agencies”, “intergovernmental organization can never proceed very far”.³⁵ Robert Cecil, in his contribution to *The Intelligent Man’s Way to Prevent War* (1933), noted that “the nearest approach to such an arbiter was the public opinion of the world” in which the common people “might have built up a potent public opinion against war”.³⁶ Indeed, for Zimmern, the people of Britain and the people of France “are the representatives and for the time being, at any rate, the most powerful and prominent representatives of the collective opinion and conscience of mankind in its struggle for the restraint of violence.”³⁷

The second solution is education. Public opinion, indeed, may not be the voice of reason since it can alternately appear as the “well-meaning appeals of the ignorant sentimentalist” or “the artful wiles of unscrupulous propaganda”. “The remedy here”, Zimmern stressed, “is not to mobilize sentiment against sentiment or propaganda against propaganda but to deepen and strength the foundations of general education”. It is education that facilitates the common man to articulate a true voice from reason, “bringing his healthy common sense

³² The “Hue and Cry” is originally contrived by Parker to declare political commitment and preventing “neutrality”: the states can at least use it to make it “becomes increasingly difficult and ultimately impossible, not in consulting the selfish interest of neutrals but in abolishing neutrality. Murders would increase if the murder could count on the neutrality of bystanders, and it is the same with war. The neutral, in fact, shirks his share of the burden of humanity”. Selected in Zimmern 1939a: 270.

³³ M. Wight 1960: 105.

³⁴ The term “voices of reason” comes from Carr 1939: 34, which may have an earlier origin.

³⁵ Zimmern 1936: 177, 8, emphasis in original.

³⁶ Cecil 1933: 263, 260.

³⁷ Zimmern 1936: 445.

to bear upon" foreign policy.³⁸ The League, Zimmern explained, "will not only exhort its members to be sensible: it should show them in detail how to be so".³⁹ The League "is only enlightening in so far as it points beyond itself to the forces in the mind of man".⁴⁰ "About nineteen-twentieths of the time", Angell argued in response to his critics, "mankind seems to be guided by the negation of reason". "What I am convinced of", he went on, "is that its only hope lies in wisdom, and that that is the thing we must nurture and cultivate".⁴¹ "If we are drifting back to barbarianism," Zimmern diagnosed in *Learning and Leadership* (1926), "the root of evil is not political but intellectual. It is because the peoples do not understand the problems of the post-war world that their statesmen are unable to control them".⁴² In his massive *The Problem of the Twentieth Century* (1930), Davies declared that "the great task is the education of the public". "Only by this means", he continued, "will it be possible to create that new mentality which seeks to repress the combative instinct in international relationships."⁴³ Leonard Woolf, in his *Barbarians at the Gate* (1939) recognized the problem of "primitive man in the modern world" as one of the ultimate causes of war. Let the civilization standard of the people be elevated, let the "barbarian inside our minds and our hearts" be purged, ensure the people are not subjected to "immediate satisfaction of the simple instincts, love, hatred, and anger": in short, ensure the common man is committed to searching for the "intelligent man's way to prevent war".⁴⁴

The third solution is to promote international intellectual cooperation and mutual understanding between the "common man". What is international intellectual cooperation? What role should be played by intellectuals who

³⁸ Zimmern 1936: 27-8.

³⁹ Zimmern 1936: 496.

⁴⁰ Zimmern 1936: 9.

⁴¹ Angell 1914: 37.

⁴² Zimmern 1926: 11.

⁴³ Davies 1930: 692

⁴⁴ Woolf 1939: 83-4. Woolf (1933: 8), described by Wilson (1996: 122-3) as believing that "human emancipation, peace, and genuine civilization depended on the application of just a little more human reason", cried out in the very beginning of his edited *The Intelligent Man's Way to Prevent War* that "We are all of us still half-savages, and these instincts of the animal or the save to kill, dominate, persecute, torture other people find themselves uncomfortable in such an ordered and humane society".

devote their reason to peace? It is in Alfred Zimmern's thoughts that one finds an encompassing answer to these questions.

International Intellectual Cooperation in the Thought of Alfred

Zimmern 1924-1936

In Zimmern's interwar writings, the intellectuals have been assigned three tasks. First, "the scholar in public affairs is a Realist: he has his feet on the rock of fact, of world facts".⁴⁵ Like Thucydides' "observant, reflective and disinterested mind" that capacitates his thorough dissection of the causes of the Ancient Greek's Great War (Peloponnesian War), a scholar is an impartial observer, an ascertainer of facts and an exposé of actual events.⁴⁶ In a similar manner to a "wise physician", he is able to use his rational faculty to provide "positive treatment for the problem itself" and to stimulate "public discussion on the general issues". Or, as a skilled doctor knowing how to allay an inflammation, a scholar is a professional inquirer into "public disorders" who can "de-emotionalize the material of their study":

"Every political problem, however passionately men may feel about it this way or that, has its non-contentious elements. [...] in politics as in other department of life, fever is abnormal and unnatural: high passions wear themselves out by their very violence. Man is a reasonable being, when his reason has access to the knowledge which is its natural food. When reason and judgment of man have once more been brought into a harmonious relationship with his environment, they will resume their ascendancy in the rhythm of the world. To facilitate this adjustment and to

⁴⁵ Zimmern 1921: 8, see also Markwell 1986: 289.

⁴⁶ Zimmern 1921: 6.

make the post-war generation conscious of this rhythm is the primary task of international intellectual co-operation”.⁴⁷

The intellectuals use their rational faculties to disclose the non-contentious facts and reveal the substratum of truth. They provide knowledge to the common man, nourishing their reason and cooling down passions that can manifest as violence. Man, in acquiring reason, knowledge and judgment, can capacitate his control of the objective environment which will be “brought into a harmonious relationship” with man’s will. “The task of opening the mind to the appreciation of international problems”, Zimmern urged in “Education and the International Good Will” (1924), “is one of the most fatiguing that can be conceived”.⁴⁸ Hence in their first task for promoting international intellectual cooperation, the intellectuals must supply knowledge of the real facts and the non-contentious truth of matters, and thereby nourish the common man’s rational faculty.

Yet the intellectuals have to do more than this. Their task is not merely to let the people understand and take control over the objective events, but to enable them to intersubjectively understand each other. To understand each other must, in the first place, be rigorously intellectual. It is a problem “of promoting international *understanding*, not that of promoting international *love*”; it is “knitting intellectual relations” rather than “emotional relations”.⁴⁹ The intellectual relations should be knitted, in the second place, by going beyond the boundary of states and reaching down to the “plain man”.⁵⁰ For Zimmern, the individual cultivation of reason must be coupled with a collective development of reason. The national cultivation of reason must be complemented by an international cultivation of reason. The intellectuals are obliged to promote “international understanding” and to “open the windows of

⁴⁷ Zimmern 1924: 65-6.

⁴⁸ Zimmern 1924: 52, see also 59.

⁴⁹ Zimmern 1924: 54-5, emphasis in original.

⁵⁰ Zimmern 1928: 13.

their minds”.⁵¹ If the intellectuals want to help the common man to cultivate his reason, they must not only provide “knowledge of the relations between states but also of the relations between *peoples*” – or more precisely, “promoting understanding between peoples” and “a knowledge of the *peoples themselves*”.⁵²

Why will the intellectuals’ promotion of the mutually intellectual understanding between people become unfailing guarantee for peace? First, in promoting intellectual understanding they enable the people to recognize that the graveness of the international problem is overriding. Second, once people realize the significance of international relations, they will consciously exercise an intersubjective control over (or through which they can change) international relations. If intellectual relations had been knitted and mutual understanding promoted, then at least they could reach consensus on the significance of the problem and “recover control over ‘events’.” “Where like is in relation with like, even at a distance and under conditions inequality”, Zimmern claimed in his inaugural lecture *The Study of International Relations* (1931) as the first Montague Burton Professor in Oxford, “there is a natural basis for agreement”. Although finding ways to knit intellectual relations may take time and take still longer to manifest positive effects, “the very effort to realize it, where the parties are reasonably like-minded, changes and humanizes the relations involved”.⁵³ Third, the mutually intellectual understanding can also enhance moral interdependence between different nationals, thus enabling them to overcome the difficulties. A knitted intellectual relations teaches people how to live harmoniously with each other. Peace can grow out of “an inner order resulting [that resulted] from the harmonious functioning of international relationships”.⁵⁴ This understanding between and of the people will lead to their mutual

⁵¹ Zimmern 1924: 67, emphasis removed.

⁵² Zimmern 1936: 5, 17.

⁵³ Zimmern 1931: 13-6.

⁵⁴ Zimmern 1931: 23. See also 27.

agreement, and render them to learn “art of living together” as the contemporaries of Zimmern frequently called it.⁵⁵ Zimmern himself stated:

“It is the common man who decides the issues of peace and war. It is the common man who carries on wars and decides wars, on a front as deep as the whole country. [...] The problem before us... is the problem of making plain to ordinary men and women how, in the large-scale interdependent world of to-day, they can best do their duty to their neighbor [...] Let us not make the mistake of thinking that what is needed is simply the repression, or even the prevention of violence. It goes far deeper than that. It is a question of how the peoples can acquire the habit of living together”.⁵⁶

For Zimmern, the intellectuals have to make it plain to the common man that “it is the problem of primitive man in the modern world”, or “*of small-scale man in a large-scale world*”; “the ordinary man of to-day should accustom himself to *enlarge* his vision so as to bear in mind that the *public affairs* of the twentieth century are *world-affairs*”.⁵⁷ The period from 1931 to 1939, which witnessed the testing of the League, the Turkish extermination of the Armenians, the Spanish Civil War, Japanese bombing of Chinese civilians, and the outbreak of the Second World War did not unsettle Zimmern’s belief. On the contrary. The more difficult it became for the League to maintain itself, the more responsibility was bestowed on the people to have a collective understanding of the graveness of the problems and to undertake actions.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Angell 1925: 162.

⁵⁶ Zimmern 1938: 20-2.

⁵⁷ Zimmern 1938: 22, 23, 26.

⁵⁸ Zimmern 1939b: 31, and Zimmern expected that soon after the war, “in due course it will pass away under the

An intellectual's third task is to use his expert knowledge to strengthen the leadership of statesmen. In international politics, the statesman may proceed very well by relying on their senses and intuition. But without the supplement of a particular knowledge, their frustration may equally render them directionless, leading to "national incubus". The intellectuals, by using their intellectual faculties, provide an essential service for the statesman. The intellectuals, through the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (1925) and the League, should construct "*a point of convergence between Knowledge and Power*".⁵⁹ It was a juxtaposition of "scholarship and statesmanship", a Geneva that has brought Plato's Republic to life.⁶⁰ To enhance the leadership of the statesman, the intellectuals are required to "adjust the available resources of goodwill, expert knowledge, and intellectual and moral leadership to the needs of the post-war world, and to set them to work together according to the rhythm of the age." "This, no more, but no less", Zimmern stressed, "is the problem of international intellectual co-operation".⁶¹ In quoting J.H. Newman's *The Idea of a University* (1852), Zimmern describes Robert Cecil, Edvard Benes, and Leon Bourgeois as statesmen in possession of a perfectly disciplined intellect. This makes their acts prudent and responsible:

impact of twentieth-century facts and that then the process of rational and neighborly discussion between the peoples of Europe, great and small, can be resumed."

⁵⁹ Zimmern 1936: 319, emphasis in original.

⁶⁰ Zimmern 1923: 224.

⁶¹ Zimmern 1929: 26.

“The intellect which has been disciplined to the perfection of its powers, which knows and thinks while it knows, which has learned to leaven the dense mass of facts and events with the elastic force of reason, such an intellect cannot be partial, cannot be exclusive, cannot be at a loss, cannot but be patient, collected, and majestically calm, because it discerns the end in every beginning, the origin in every end, and law in every interruption, the limit in each delay; because it ever knows where it stands and how its path lies from one point to another”.⁶²

For individuals, including statesman, the discipline of the intellect can render them patient, collected, impartial and capable of penetrating into the origin and end of things.

Idealism and Its Upshots

“Where are the Idealists in interwar International Relations?” is Ashworth’s intriguing question.⁶³ One of the answers is the Idealists’ language of Kantian reason uttered for empowering their political program that has three defining, complex, traits. Both the conventionalists and revisionists overlook the sophisticated role played by reason through these three features.

First, the Liberal Institutionalists emphasize the idea of Kantian reason.⁶⁴ They urge the common man to cultivate his individual intellectual faculty, to control his violent impulses, to verbalize what they think as the voice of reason,

⁶² Zimmern 1923: 232.

⁶³ Ashworth 2006.

⁶⁴ Apart from reason they also waged a war of “internationalism”, “democracy”, “international constitution (rule of law)”, and “civilization” against “nationalism”, “autocracy”, “anarchy”, and “barbarianism”.

to use persuasion to reach peaceful consensus, and to establish an intersubjectively understood of the international problems *and* to work towards collective change within international politics. Rather than using the concept to explain how decision-makers should make a deterrent move or to initiate a hegemonic war (as I shall show in the next chapter), these thinkers consider the cultivation, articulation and mobilization of the common man's reason to be indispensable for international politics.

A second feature is the exhortative tone they adopt when speaking of the language of Kantian reason. For the Liberal Institutionalists, Kantian reason is not an assumption of what men actually are, but an ideal for which the common man *should* strive to be. Instead of confirming the later Realist accusation that the Liberal Institutionalists have naively believed in the reason of man, the latter rather share the former's interpretation of human nature. Nevertheless, the Liberal Institutionalists are characterized by their emphasis on the need to transform the common man into a more rational being. The normativity they endowed on the conception was integral to the purpose of creating IR as an academic discipline. Later on, I shall show how Kantian reason is used by Risse and Muller – the German Idealists – in an explanatory rather than exhortative way.

Third, the Liberal Institutionalists ascribe a distinct subject to reason. Reason is an attribute of the common man, not one of state. The Idealists did not attach hope to the claim that states' actions can be governed by reason (as Cox claimed). Rather, they argued that it was the common man who should cultivate their reason. For Zimmern, "'Reason', once transmogrified into 'Reason of State', was a convenient pretext for setting aside the moral law".⁶⁵

The Idealists' attempt to foster reason finally failed. As Boucher amply put it: "The Wall Street Crash of 1929, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, the withdrawal of Japan and Germany

⁶⁵ Zimmern 1936: 62.

from the League in 1935, and the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 confirmed the view of sceptics that faith in human reason for the divergence of world peace was misplaced”.⁶⁶

It is against this background that Carr introduced the term “utopianism” into the field in *The Twenty Years’ Crisis 1919-1939* (1939). Far from slurring intangible names of as an accusation, Carr’s target was clearly in view. He depicted the “foundations of utopianism”, which he dated back to Bentham and Buckle, as a “doctrine of reason”, the “rationalist faith”, “rationalism”, “intellectualism of international politics”, “abstract rationalism” in which only “the metaphysicians of Geneva” believed. For Norman Angell, for instance, “war was simply a ‘failure of understanding’.” “Never was there an age”, bemoaned Carr, “which so unreservedly proclaimed the supremacy of the intellect”.⁶⁷ Carr was very aware – like J.A. Hobson before and Morgenthau after – that this doctrine of reason is underpinned by a “triple conviction” in the positive relation between intellect and action. First, the Liberal Institutionalists believe that to reason rightly from *a priori* starting points is not only a necessary but sufficient condition for interest *and* moral conduct. Second, education, spread of knowledge and public opinion as the “voice of reason” can be deployed by the common man who will make right judgment. Third, action results necessarily from their enhanced knowledge. “Reason could demonstrate the absurdity of the international anarchy; and with increasing knowledge, enough people would be rationally convinced of its absurdity to put an end to it”.⁶⁸ As Carr himself recapped in a rhetorical passage:

“If mankind in its international relations has signally failed to achieve the rational good, it must either have been too stupid to understand that good, or too wicked to pursue it. Professor Zimmern leans to the hypothesis of

⁶⁶ Boucher 1998: 7.

⁶⁷ Carr 1939: 27-39, *passim*. Sometimes Carr speak of the “essential foundation of the liberal creed” or “foundation-stones” of Liberalism.

⁶⁸ Carr 1939: 27-8.

stupidity, repeating almost word for word the argument of Buckle and Sir Norman Angell: 'The obstacle in our path [...] is not in the moral sphere, but in the intellectual [...]. It is not because men are ill-disposed that they cannot be educated into a world social consciousness. It is because they – let us be honest and say 'we' – are beings of conservative temper and limited intelligence'. [...] Professor Toynbee, on the other hand, sees the causes of the breakdown in human wickedness."⁶⁹

For Carr, the utopians have privileged the intellect (*a priori*) over experience, morality over power, purpose over facts and theory over practice. Whereas they believe in reason, a Realist will correct the rationalist dogma by historical induction and experience. Given the "complete bankruptcy" of the "synthesis of morality and reason", and the "breakdown of the system of ethics" on the basis of "the reconciliation of reason and morality through the doctrine of the harmony of interests", Realists will necessarily view that "morality is the product of power".⁷⁰ Whereas the utopians want to see that the League, which is "closely bound up with the twin belief that public opinion was bound to prevail and that public opinion was the voice of reason", could prevail over violence, the Realists conversely accept the fall of the League as a fact.⁷¹

Although Carr's critique is not well received in Britain because of his "disparagement of reason",⁷² it does arouse a number of echoes from the other side of the Atlantic. First, in the long run, Carr's accusation of the Idealist naïve belief in reason that can lead to the convergence of interest and morality (the "harmony of interest") had an intimidating effect on the latter theorists, especially the Neoliberals. As I shall show in the next chapter (section ii), many of these Neoliberals, such as Arthur Stein and Robert Axelrod, used a distinct, "egoistic", conception of reason to show that international institutions are

⁶⁹ Carr 1939: 38.

⁷⁰ Carr 1939: 58, 62-3, 1945: 102.

⁷¹ Carr 1939: 34, 29.

⁷² Wilson 1998: 2.

beneficial even if the states are acting in accordance with their own self-interest. Second, within the next few years, reason would be received with profound suspicion and even disdain by IR thinkers in the US. Nevertheless, rather than offering a complete repudiation of the term, many scholars, including Hans Morgenthau, instead displays quite a nuanced, transitive, and mixed position.

(ii) The Realist Reconstruction: The Case of Hans Morgenthau

Ideology vs. True Reason: Scientific Man vs. Power Politics 1937-1946

Having witnessed the series of fiascos of the Anglophone statesman (and intellectuals) to come to terms with the challenge of Totalitarianism, Hans Morgenthau, after his immigration to the US in 1937, resolutely embarked on a project. This project, culminating in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (1946, hereafter *Scientific Man*), was a dissection of the paralyzed “political philosophy” that failed to triumph over the “intellectual, moral, and political challenge of fascism”.⁷³ The critique of *Scientific Man* by Morgenthau, far from being an academic attack on the “behaviorist social science” represented by Charles Merriam and Harold Laswell in Chicago,⁷⁴ addressed political failure such as Robert Cecil’s “rational discussion”, Chamberlain’s “peace in our time”, the unexpected defeat of the French army in 1940, and the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor in 1941. It was against this *political* background that Morgenthau spent five years turning from law to an investigation of the “philosophy” of Rationalism.⁷⁵

Being Morgenthau’s first English but “premature” monograph,⁷⁶ *Scientific Man* manifests as well as distorts Morgenthau’s conception of reason. Both of

⁷³ Morgenthau 1946a: 6-7.

⁷⁴ Juntersonke 2010: 131ff.

⁷⁵ Morgenthau 1946a: 105, 115, 101, see also Frei 2001: 182-3. Morgenthau’s undertaking of this project, in addition to his liberal commitment, was also under the pressure of seeking and securing a profession to live in America, see Lebow 2011: 547-50.

⁷⁶ Morgenthau 1970a: 5.

the manifestation and distortion will become evident by comparing with the critique undertaken by Carr.⁷⁷

First, *Scientific Man* exposes Morgenthau's criticism of a particular conception of reason that overemphasizes the potency of the human intellect. Like Carr, Morgenthau criticized the fact that Rationalism was predicated on the belief that "man gained confidence in the general transforming powers of reason" (recall Zimmern's transfiguring, harmonizing, power of reason). In contrast to Carr who views the Liberal Institutionalists' intellectualism as mainly manifested within the political terrain, Morgenthau argues that Rationalism has pervaded into the every corner of the social world: Rationalism is an assumption that "the rationality of nature" could also be attained in the "social world" as if the issues of ethics, politics, and even arts are susceptible to intellectual control.⁷⁸ (Morgenthau's Rationalism thus seems to be more than what the Liberal Institutionalists advocate.)

Parallel to Carr's definition of Idealism as the "triple conviction", Morgenthau also depicted Rationalism as the threefold zealous faith in human reason. First, "rationally right action is of necessity the successful one"; second, "the rationally right and the ethically good are identical"; third, education can cultivate reason and human reason has universal application in the social sphere.⁷⁹ Yet unlike Carr whose criticism makes few distinctions between the instrumental and purposive use of reason, Morgenthau is more aware that the Liberal Institutionalists want to use reason to designate both the means and ends of political conduct. The Liberal Institutionalists believe that "the reign of reason [as the end] in international affairs will make impossible those fundamental conflicts, and reason will provide instrumentality by which the remaining conflicts can be settled peacefully". They hope that the triumph of reason over

⁷⁷ I compare it with Carr's critique to show that in contrast to the conventional understanding (e.g. Reus-Smit 2002), Morgenthau does not go as far as Carr does in crusading the "Idealists". I will make more comparisons (with other Realists) below.

⁷⁸ Morgenthau 1946a: 26, 9, 104, 144, 12-8, 27-8, 35-7, 1947: 312-3.

⁷⁹ Morgenthau 1946a: 11-3.

the outburst of “political passions” and of “ignorance and emotions” can designate the end of human action. The construction of “rational system of legal rules” and to the “rational solution either through compromise or through adjudication”, will provide instrumentality for safeguarding peace.⁸⁰

Like Carr, finally, Morgenthau also condemned the overlook of the human lust for power, “the ubiquity of evil in human action” or “ubiquity of the desire for power”. The “animus dominandi”, the “very life-blood of the action, the constitutive principle of politics as a distinct sphere of human activity”, is ignored. The social dimension of conduct, namely that rational action may be frustrated by another agent, was completely overlooked.⁸¹ “The League of Nations, harmony of interests, collective security, identification of the national interest with the universal good”, as Morgenthau summarized later in the founding issue of *World Politics* (1948), “are indeed classic examples of a utopian rationalism”.⁸²

Second, which proves to be well beyond his expectation, is that the rhetorical forcefulness of Morgenthau’s critique rather obfuscates his intention to “rescue reason from the Idealist Rationalism” (to borrow Alker’s term). Whereas many later IR theorists regard Morgenthau’s *Scientific Man* as a complete refutation of the significance of human reason in politics,⁸³ Morgenthau intends on the contrary to restore the importance of the intellect in a complex way. As a letter of two years later exposed,⁸⁴ Morgenthau regretted his failure to make it clear in *Scientific Man* that there was a distinction between “rationalism” and “rational” (and “scientism” and “science”), and for him the irrational or anti-rational view of politics was no less malignant than the rationalistic one. (Unlike Carr whose Marxist orientation engenders hostility to the “liberal rationality” and the proclamation of its “bankruptcy”, Morgenthau considers, anticipating his

⁸⁰ Morgenthau 1946a: 71, 53ff., 75-6, 85, 90, 52; also 1945c: 196-7, 1946b: 232.

⁸¹ Morgenthau 1946a: 194-6.

⁸² Morgenthau 1948b: 129.

⁸³ See e.g. Jervis 1994: 867-9

⁸⁴ Behr and Rösch 2012: 48, Jervis 1994: 864-5.

defense of Liberalism in the 1960s and 1970s, that Rationalism has both considerable validity and value under certain socio-historical conditions.⁸⁵) At least in Morgenthau's own intention, the critique of Rationalism is not designed to be a complete destruction of reason. Rather, it has to be a restoration of the real significance of reason in politics.

How does Morgenthau undertake his reconstruction to save reason from a conception that exaggerates the potency of the human intellect? First, Morgenthau brings the lust for power back into the social world to balance the alleged potency of human intellect. Notice, however, that Morgenthau brings power back in a way that is fundamentally different from the one viewed by Carr (at least in Morgenthau's own view). Whereas Carr polarizes the relation between reason/morality as utopian, and experience/power as reality, and wants to inhabit the space between Realism and Utopianism, Morgenthau instead subdivides the same human existence into various dimensions that has at once an intellectual, a passionate, and a moral, facet.

For Morgenthau, Carr's problem is the "philosophically untenable equation of utopia, theory, and morality" on the one side, and experience, practice, induction, power and reality, on the other. This dichotomization leads Carr to the emphasis on the one (latter) pair at the expense of the other. The Liberal Institutionalists had established a utopia of intellect and morality to govern power. Carr created a "utopia of power", and a utopia of eventual experiences that makes it impossible to have a "transcendent point of view from which to

⁸⁵ For Morgenthau (1955a: 66), Rationalism "was not destroyed by its own rational deficiencies or by the hostility of the intellectuals", but "by the modern conditions and problems of its life" which rendered it "unable to reflect and solve", see also Shilliam 2009: 313-5. Not only did Rationalism enhance man's mastery over nature in the premodern era, disenchant international politics from religious fevers in the beginning of the modern period and facilitate the balance of power, it had also performed a well service for the middle class in their struggle against feudal rulers. In its socio-historical origin, the Liberalists, realizing that their inner commonality prevailed over disputes, build a range of mechanism to resolve their internal conflicts through such "instrumentality of liberal rationality" as "rational argument" (public opinion), "legal rationality" (legal adjudication), and "rational means of compromise and adjudication" (democracy). In their external struggle with the feudal and autocratic class, they represented themselves as true reason, constructing on the one hand the rulers as representatives of power, violence, arbitrariness, and on the other, "the people" (middle class) as by nature "being inclined to reason and peace". Rationalism, serving as "an ideological weapon", had helped the Liberalists demolish the autocratic class while simultaneously concealed the power struggle underlying it. See Morgenthau 1946a: 20, 62-3, 106-7, 113-4, 1948a: 165, Nobel 1995: 65. The Liberal dimension of Morgenthau's thought, see Morgenthau 1960a, 1970-1973, Scheuerman 2009: Ch.6.

survey the political scene and to appraise the phenomenon of power”.⁸⁶ Rather than retaining the tensions between the reason and power and thus constantly enabling reason to scrutinize the use of power (intellectually as well as morally),⁸⁷ Carr dichotomizes the relation between the two and attempts at a permanent resolution. If previously the potency of the intellect has been exaggerated as if intellectual life is *the* way of human existence, then now it is opportune to understand that it is only one among many dimensions of human existence. And to recognize power as one dimension of human existence is *not*, as Williams construes,⁸⁸ to construct political action as within an *exclusively* distinct sphere or an *ideal* type, where only power is preponderant and reason is crushed. Rather, it is to recognize that the existentialist condition retains the antinomies. Politics is a distinct sphere that despite admitting of rational interference (since it is only one dimension), is characteristically driven by the lust for power to control other human subject as instrument. Or, as Morgenthau clarifies six years later, the autonomy of politics “does not imply disregard for the existence and importance” of other modes of being: “political realism is based on a pluralistic conception of human nature”, which makes the mere political man a beast, the mere moral man a fool.⁸⁹

Second, for Morgenthau, reason and power, which has an intimate relation, interplays in a nuanced way. As Morgenthau stated in the beginning of *Scientific Man*:

⁸⁶ Thus remarked Morgenthau (1948b: 134) two years later. Rather than bringing reason and power back into a harmonious relationship with human existence (to use Zimmern’s phrase) as a multidimensional being, Carr leads critique to a construction of a newly idealized sphere of action to compete with Rationalism. Hence Carr, like Carl Schmitt, led critique to the demolition of an old ideology and replacement by a new one. Carr 1939: Ch.3. On the Mannheim-Morgenthau relation, see further Jütersonke 2010:151-6; Behr and Rösch 2012: 44-5.

⁸⁷ For Morgenthau, reason is crucial for revealing the truth of politics that poses a moral challenge to the function of power. In 1948, for instance, Morgenthau criticized Carr: “whoever holds seeming superiority of power becomes of necessity the repository of superior morality as well. Power thus corrupts not only the actor on the political scene, but even the observer, unfortified by a transcendent standard of ethics”. See more in Morgenthau 1970a.

⁸⁸ Williams 2005: Ch.3.

⁸⁹ Morgenthau 1952a: 12.

“In order to eliminate from the political sphere not power politics [...] but the destructiveness of power politics, rational faculties are needed which are different from, and superior to, the reason of the scientific age. *Politics must be understood though reason, yet it is not in reason that it finds its model.*”⁹⁰

And he rearticulated in its end:

“To be successful and truly ‘rational’ in social action [...], it is in the insight and the wisdom by which more-than-scientific man elevates his experiences into the universal laws of human nature. It is he who, by doing so, established himself as the representative of true reason, while nothing-but-scientific man appears as the true dogmatist who universalizes cognitive principles of limited validity and applies them to realms not accessible to them. It is also the former who proves himself to be the true realist; for it is he who does justice to the true nature of things”.⁹¹

For Morgenthau, the rational faculties are requisite. To be “truly” rational in action and to behave as the representative of “true” reason can be achieved not by abandoning reason but by realizing its existentialist boundary. Notice Morgenthau’s rhetoric: he radicalizes the limitedness of reason in politics into an assertion that politics is a realm “not accessible to them [cognitive principles]”.

Third, unlike Carr’s series of dichotomizations leading ultimately to the resolution of tensions, Morgenthau’s critique of Rationalism is concluded by its acknowledgment of the multidimensional being of man and its associated embrace of antinomies. First, is the rationally right automatically the successful in conduct? No, since reason is only one way to give life meaning, and man

⁹⁰ Morgenthau 1946a: 9-10, emphasis added.

⁹¹ Morgenthau 1946a: 219-20.

acts no less as a passionate and religious, than rational, being. As a multidimensional existence, “the mystical desire for union with the universe, the love of Don Juan, Faust’s thirst for knowledge”, as well as the *animus dominandi*, all are motivating forces.⁹² Second, in addition to its failure to monopoly the spring of human conduct, reason also fails to monopoly the ultimate source of morality. “In brief, man is also a moral being”. “It is this side of man”, Morgenthau continued, that Rationalism “has obscured and distorted, if not obliterated, by trying to reduce moral problems to scientific propositions”.⁹³ Finally, Morgenthau highlighted that power must be recognized as a constitutive element of politics. “There can be no actual denial of the lust for power”, as Morgenthau neatly summed up, “without denying the very conditions of human existence in this world”.⁹⁴

As the consummation of his project to reveal what reason cannot accomplish, *Scientific Man* has two historic significances. First, for Morgenthau himself, *Scientific Man* exposed his existentialist position towards reason and marked a turning point in his intellectual trajectory. Starting from a critique of the Rationalistic conception of reason – a delineation of the existential trait of politics in which reason can have an influence on, but never determine, power – Morgenthau would later on turn to the other side, arguing that reason should discipline the use of power. After years of being an immigrant and experiencing the “red scare”, Morgenthau would, as “the representative of true reason”, vigorously plea for a “truly rational”, “true realist”, American foreign policy. Reason, Morgenthau would subsequently insist, could both give intelligible and prescriptive meaning to the novel international conditions that defined the new, “Cold War”, era.

Second, Morgenthau’s dualistic stance towards reason was also exemplary of the transitive conception of reason held by many scholars at that time

⁹² Morgenthau 1946a:194.

⁹³ Morgenthau 1946a:168.

⁹⁴ Morgenthau 1946a: 187-201 (at 201); on the moral being, see Scheuerman 2009: 54-64.

(especially the later named Realist after 1950). John Herz, who was working during this period on his upcoming *Political Realism and Political Idealism* (1951), outlined his “Realist Liberalism” through an adoption of a dual position towards reason. On the one hand, Hertz argued “political Idealism is characteristic of that type of political thinking [that] concentrates its interest upon ‘rational’ conditions or ‘rational’ solutions”.⁹⁵ “But”, turning to the other side, he simultaneously insisted that “at the same time it seems to us that it would be a rash conclusion to say that, because rationality does not exist in the world as we find it, the ideas and ideals which constitute it cannot have any effect, except the negative one”.⁹⁶ G.F. Kennan, in his *American Diplomacy* (1951), criticized the “emotional fervor” of the American belief in public opinion, and pleaded that “employing force for rational and restricted purposes rather than for purposes which are emotional and to which it is hard to find a rational limit”.⁹⁷ Herz and Kennan’s transitional position towards reason, which exhibits considerable tension, embodies Morgenthau’s statement in *Scientific Man* that politics must be understood through reason, yet not in the Rationalistic one that politics finds its model.

Rationality in Theory and Practice: The Construction of “Rational Realism” 1947-1959 (Part I: Political Argumentation)

Although *Scientific Man* was torn apart piece by piece within the American circle of political studies, Morgenthau was still capable of moving on and unfolding his construction of “true reason”. In *Politics among Nations* (1948), a textbook published one year later for undergraduates, Morgenthau for the first time announced that he was embarking on a “scientific enquiry” to “detect and understand the forces which determine political relations among nations”. In

⁹⁵ Herz 1951: 18. “Rationality”, Herz continued, “is not inherent in things political themselves; that it only forms the sum total of certain theories and ideas concerning what would be imposed on an irrational world”.

⁹⁶ Herz 1951: 133.

⁹⁷ Kennan 1951: 88-9.

contrast to the dogmatic scientists, Morgenthau's own "scientific enquiry" necessarily ran the risk of obfuscation, precisely because facts in the social world are bound to be ambiguous, equivocal, and less susceptible to intellectual comprehension.⁹⁸

How this "scientific enquiry" commences Morgenthau's *theoretical* construction of a rational realism will be seen in the next section. Here, it is only necessary to note that the successfulness of that textbook, which brought him both fame and intimacy within policy circles, was nevertheless subverted by the dramatic events that ensued afterwards. In 1949, the Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons and the establishment of communist rule in China (and the Korean War that would break out shortly) shocked the Americans as if a worldwide communist aggression was being commenced. In the face of this "Red Scare", Morgenthau cautioned that "the choice before the United States is to prepare for war or for peace (or, perhaps, for both)", yet "we are doing neither".⁹⁹ The Truman administration was simultaneously considered to be badly equipped for waging a war because its policy was not going far enough in Europe but had gone too far in Asia.¹⁰⁰ Whereas the government should have enhanced its military existence in Europe and redressed the nuclear balance of power – in addition to the Marshall Plan as economic assistance – it was rather assumed that the apocalyptic consequences of a nuclear war was known to Stalin, and hence warranted no military vigilance. In Asia the situation was the very opposite: the government misjudged the communist movements in the region as instances of military aggression. They were in fact national independence movements, with communism providing organizational leadership rather than the ultimate aspiration: they demanded political and economic (as opposed to military) solution. Nor was the government any better prepared for peace. Deliberately fabricating the public conception of the Soviets

⁹⁸ Morgenthau 1948a: 3-7.

⁹⁹ Morgenthau 1950a: 166. Morgenthau's perception of the early Cold War, see 1951b, 1954b, 1956c, 1956d, 1956e, 1952a: 326-33.

¹⁰⁰ Morgenthau (1953: 13) later summarized thus.

as irrational, immoral, foul, and belligerent,¹⁰¹ the Truman administration not only refused to reach a negotiated settlement with the Soviet Union, but instead appeared to be filled with the militant spirit of a democratic crusade.

Thus in the immediate years after 1949, Morgenthau the stuff of policy planning essentially turned himself into a vigorous policy critic. Changed, however, is not merely his role. First, it is during this period, as Scheuerman has cogently shown,¹⁰² that Morgenthau starts to fervently embrace the term “Realism” in his vocabulary. Fearing to witness that the democratic crusading spirit, overacting in Asia and inaction in Europe would lead to an unanticipated outbreak of war, Morgenthau forewarned that a superpower conflict might far exceed “rational limitations”.¹⁰³

Second, and what has been seriously neglected, is the Kantian–rational nature of Realism depicted by Morgenthau. At the heart of Realism, there must be a Kantian–rational conduct of American foreign policy that is *normatively* prerequisite for tackling the present dilemma.

This advocate for a “rational Realism” commences with his *In Defense of the National Interest* (1951, hereafter *Defense*). In *Defense*, which stands as a milestone in his intellectual development, Morgenthau succeeds in what he proposed but failed to spell out fully in *Scientific Man* – namely to demarcate Rationalism from “true reason”. In the beginning of *Defense*, Morgenthau criticizes the American leaders for committing the very same Rationalistic error as the Idealists once did. The postwar American policies in Europe and Asia, Morgenthau remarked, “repeat in a new terminology the same error which has frustrated our policies with regard to Germany twice in this century”.¹⁰⁴ The old error, which is roughly called by Carr as “rationalistic” and used by Morgenthau in *Scientific Man*, is now enunciated explicitly under the new terminology as “Utopianism” and “Legalism”. The mistakes of “Utopianism” and “Legalism”

¹⁰¹ The best work on this period of history remains Campbell 1992: Ch.1.

¹⁰² Scheuerman 2009: 71ff, cf. Rice 2013: 159-63.

¹⁰³ Morgenthau 1951a: 92ff.

¹⁰⁴ Morgenthau 1951b: 200.

manifest in Franklin Roosevelt and Cordell Hull's hopes that the antagonism between the superpowers could be reconciled and resolved by an international organization (the UN), legalistic commitment (the Yalta Agreement), and public opinion "reforming and bringing him [Stalin] to reason".¹⁰⁵ "Sentimentalism" and "Neo-isolationism" were subsequently added to the sins of "Utopianism" and "Legalism": both contaminated the Truman government to the extent that that it had not only demonized the Soviet Union but, reminiscent of Wilson's "crusading spirit", "erected a message of salvation to all the world, unlimited in purpose, unlimited in commitments".¹⁰⁶ For Morgenthau, these were "the four *intellectual* errors" committed by the successive American leaders from 1945 to 1951.¹⁰⁷

These four "intellectual errors", Morgenthau argued, must be corrected by the true reason. A conduct of foreign policy guided by reason is requisite for defending the national interest. In this critical moment, Morgenthau urgently called for a "rational guidance for political action", "sound political thinking", "a clear and concrete understanding of what is it we are fighting", a "rational approach to the problem of American assistance", or simply, "a rational foreign policy".¹⁰⁸ Morgenthau declared that

"A foreign policy, to be successful, must be commensurate with the power available to carry it out. The number of good deeds a nation, like an individual, desires to do is infinite; yet the power at the disposal of a nation, as of an individual, to carry them through is finite. It is this contrast between what a nation wants to do and what it is capable of doing [...] which compels all nations to limit their objectives in view of the relative scarcity of available power [...] To establish a hierarchical order, an order of

¹⁰⁵ Morgenthau 1951a: 91-112.

¹⁰⁶ Morgenthau 1951a: 78, 116, 35, 129.

¹⁰⁷ Morgenthau 1951a: Ch.IV *passim*. It was issued in Britain under a less polemical and more substantial title: *American Foreign Policy: A Critical Examination*.

¹⁰⁸ Morgenthau 1951a: 35, 160, 89, 123, 118.

priorities, among all possible objectives of a nation's foreign policy, must be the first step in framing a rational foreign policy."¹⁰⁹

A "rational" foreign policy, as Morgenthau remarks, provides precisely the instrument for defending the national interest. Unlike the "Idealists", Morgenthau directs reason to power, arguing that the realization of true reason in designating political conduct must be built on the recognition of the significance of power. Yet like the Idealists who have been criticized for using reason as an instrument to solve conflict, now it is Morgenthau himself who resurrects the old belief that the reign of reason in the making of foreign policy can prune down overweening ambitions to the level of available resources.¹¹⁰

Yet from 1952 onwards, the newly inaugurated Eisenhower administration not only failed to complete the unfinished business left by his predecessor, but, in the view of Morgenthau, went further in the wrong direction. In Europe, with the overt compliance and covert manipulation of Konrad Adenauer, the American overreliance on remilitarizing Germany (1952-1954) and integrating her into the European Defense Community (1954) both limited and undermined the US' own military influence. Instead of reducing extravagant commitments in Asia, the government rather drastically extended "military aid" from Syngman Rhee in South Korea (1950) to Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam (early 1950s), to Chang Chai Shek in Taiwan (1955), and to the states such as Pakistan, in addition to its attempt to organize an Asian NATO (i.e. SEATO, 1954-7). All these policy moves, Morgenthau warned, would maximize the risk in Europe and involve the Americans excessively in Asia so draining the US financially and dragging her into a direct conflict in a military front.

For such a misconceived foreign policy, the problem did not lie in a paralyzed action. Rather, Morgenthau warned, in a Zimmernian tone, that the fundamental

¹⁰⁹ Morgenthau 1951a: 111, 117-8.

¹¹⁰ Smith 1981, Nobel 1995: 68-9, M. Cox 2007: 179-83, Scheuerman 2009: Ch.3. Translated into policy language, Morgenthau was recommending that the US should liquidate indiscriminate commitments in Asia, concentrate on Europe, and give priority to a bargained-with-strength settlement with the Soviets.

problem laid in “an all-pervading deficiency of understanding”, the “clumsiness and confusions” of intellectual guidance, the “unsophisticated and mechanical way of thought”. The crux is not political but intellectual, not “the quality of specific policies” but “the quality of the thought which goes into them”. Accordingly, Morgenthau argued for thinking of a “rational foreign policy”, a “political doctrine” that “would give political meaning to those technical activities and co-ordinate them with the over-all objectives of our political policy.”¹¹¹ To give overarching meaning to every move undertaken on the grand chessboard, statesmen are required to discipline their intellects to the perfection of their powers. In the case of the American (military) aid to the Asian states where “military aid has no rational political objective”, for example,

“That policy is lacking in the practical discipline which is the reflection, in the field of action, of the discipline of the intellect. When I am sure in the knowledge of what I seek to achieve and how to go about achieving it, that certain knowledge will give all my actions a common direction and all my plans a common standard for evaluation, and the smallest detail of my planning and the action will be informed by it”.¹¹²

In crafting policy, therefore, reason rather gives all political conducts an overarching meaning, a center of ultimate end around which all the detailed proceedings should be arrayed. Reason goes beyond the mere designation of means.

During the second term of the Eisenhower administration, Morgenthau was once more shocked by two incidents which distanced Morgenthau from the rational ideal. In 1956, when the simultaneous crises in Suez and Hungary (1956) occurred, Morgenthau vehemently criticized that the president, rather than driving a wedge between the Soviet Union and its satellite states, did his

¹¹¹ Morgenthau, 1954c, 1957d, 1958b, 1959b, all in 1962b: 222, 46, 169, 71; 1954b: 21, 1956c: 252.

¹¹² Morgenthau 1956c: 267-8.

formidable opponent a favor against the US' own allies by eliciting an UN resolution. This incident demonstrated that Eisenhower neither based policy design on "a reasoned calculation of the interest involved and power engaged", nor detached himself from his predecessor's sentimental attachment to the UN. "A discriminating and unemotional intelligence", as Morgenthau cried out, "is more necessary than ever in our approach to the UN".¹¹³ Again, in 1957, stunned by the "missile gap" (the Soviet emanation of Sputnik) and Dulles' appointment of Maxwell Gluck as ambassador to Sri Lanka, Morgenthau charged bitterly that the American leaders are subjecting national interest to "popular prejudices", trading "a sound foreign policy" for "the demands of domestic politics" which constitutes "a formidable handicap to the rational conduct of American foreign policy".¹¹⁴

Indeed, within the decade from Truman to Eisenhower, Morgenthau had constantly invoked Tocqueville's aphorism (wrote in *Democracy in America*) from *Defense* to *The Purpose of American Politics* (1960): "The propensity that induces democracies to obey impulse rather than prudence, and to abandon mature design for the gratification of a momentary passion, was clearly seen in America on the breaking out of the French Revolution."¹¹⁵ Instead of using reason to provide a basis for both the end and means of defending national interest, the two administrations rather give way to sentimental and emotional considerations. It is precisely at this point, Morgenthau cautioned in a manner reminiscent of Zimmern, that an intellectual theory was needed to both de-emotionalize and facilitate statesmen's actions.

Rationality in Theory and Practice: The Construction of Rational

Realism 1947-1959 (Part II: Theoretical Debate)

¹¹³ Morgenthau 1956e: 33, 1957c: 278.

¹¹⁴ Morgenthau 1957b: 210, 1961a: 301, 1961c:100.

¹¹⁵ Morgenthau 1951: 222-3, 1960: 26.

In parallel to his normative plea for using reason to structure both ends and means of conducting American foreign policy is a war waged in the theoretical front. Ironically, although Morgenthau devoted considerably less time to this theoretical enterprise – throughout the 1950s, his writings on a theory of international politics are characterized not only by paucity but also by monotonous repetition¹¹⁶ – these writings have nevertheless attracted vast attention because they establish the basis for Morgenthau’s “Six Principles of Realism”.

With the exception of Molloy,¹¹⁷ IR scholars seem to have overlooked that *the* defining purpose behind the six principles is its offering of a “rational” theory of international politics. Indeed, Morgenthau’s writings in the 1950s reach their zenith with his construction of an account of *rational* Realism. Having published *In Defense of National Interest* (1951) intermediately between J.H. Herz’s *Political Realism and Political Idealism* (1951) and G.F. Kennan’s *American Diplomacy* (1951), Morgenthau received ardent, though misconstrued, responses from many academics. The reviewers, including the celebrated Quincy Wright, not only downplayed his substantial policy recommendations, but criticized his dichotomization between “realism” and other various “ism”s for befuddling policy *analysis*.¹¹⁸ Morgenthau, in response, soon opened a second front within academia. From 1952 to 1959, Morgenthau can be seen, as a rejoinder, to undertake three rhetorical, and two metaphorical, moves to deepen the construction of *rational* Realism.

The first polemical move is Morgenthau’s portrait of the dispute as “Another Great Debate” (1952). In it, Morgenthau defends himself chiefly on theoretical ground. The principle merit of Realism, Morgenthau declared, was its offering of a “scientific” theory that brought “rational outline” and “order and meaning to a mass of phenomena” without which “it would remain disconnected and

¹¹⁶ Compare Morgenthau 1954a, 1955b: esp.456-7, 1959c, 1959a: 17ff., 1959c: 121-38.

¹¹⁷ Molloy 2006: 77.

¹¹⁸ Wolfers 1952, Tucker 1952: 212-4, Wright 1952: 119, 126.

unintelligible". Realism at least enables scholars to intellectually understand the statesmen's political actions:

"In other words, we put ourselves in the position of a statesman who must meet a certain problem of foreign policy under certain circumstances and ask ourselves, what are the rational alternatives from which a statesman may choose who must meet this problem under these circumstances, presuming always that he acts in a rational manner, and which of these rational alternatives was this particular statesman, acting under these circumstances, likely to choose? It is the testing of this rational hypothesis against the actual facts and their consequences which [...] makes the scientific writing of political history possible."¹¹⁹

Like Zimmern, Morgenthau defines a Realist as putting his feet on "actual facts". The first function of rational Realism is to serve as a "rational hypothesis" to make political acts and actual events intellectually understandable.

In his second rhetorical move Morgenthau polemicized his original statement. In 1954, when he postulated a novel "Principles of Realism" (based on some materials from "Another Great Debate") in the second edition of *Politics among Nations* (1954), Morgenthau announced that the rational Realism had two incomparable virtues. First, Realism, more than simply "ascertaining facts and giving them meaning through reason", is claimed to be capable of exposing the "force" that determined political relations, of penetrating into those forces as "objective laws" rooted in human nature. Second, for Realism, its superiority does not merely build on its competency to grasp the objective laws, but to *verbalize* them as "a rational theory" which always lies behind the actions of the statesmen. "As disinterested observer", Morgenthau announced in a

¹¹⁹ Morgenthau 1952c: 965-6.

Zimmernian tone, “we understand his thoughts and actions perhaps better than he, the actor on the political scene, does himself”.¹²⁰

Third, by giving meaning to political action through human reason, Realism can provide a truly convergent point between scholarship and statesmanship that links the scholar and statesman altogether. As Morgenthau stated in his contribution to the Rockefeller-foundation-funded meeting on “IR theory” in 1959:

“What makes a theory of politics possible in spite of the ambiguities of its subject matter is the rationality in which both the mind of the observer and the object of observation, that is, politics, partake. Politics is engaged in by rational men who pursue certain rational interests with rational means. The observer, however, handicapped by the ambiguities...is able, by virtue of his own rationality, to retrace the steps which politics has taken in the past and to anticipate those it will take in the future. Knowing that behind these steps there is a rational mind like his own, the observer can put himself into the place of the statesman – past, present, or future – and think as he has thought or is likely to think”.¹²¹

The common intellect, transcending the constriction of time, unites the political observer and actor intersubjectively together. For Morgenthau, as for Zimmern, the common rationality of man also guarantees that one’s rational theory can be used by another individual (a statesman) to discipline conduct. Like Zimmern’s intellectuals, Morgenthau announces that the rational Realism devised by theorists can be further used “for rational discipline in action” that guards national interest against emotional, ideological, and other motivational,

¹²⁰ Morgenthau 1954a: 3-5.

¹²¹ Morgenthau 1959a: 20-1.

deviations.¹²² Or, as Morgenthau's first metaphorical move in 1955 illustrated, a theory is like a map that

“allows the observer [...] to orient himself in the maze of empirical phenomena which make up the field of politics, and to establish a measure of rational order within it. A central concept, such as power, then provides a kind of rational outline of politics, a map of the political scene. Such a map [...] provides the timeless features of its geography distinct from their ever-changing historic setting [...] and] will tell us what are the rational possibilities for travel from one spot on the map to another [...] Thus it imparts a measure of rational order to the observing mind and, by doing so, establishes one of the conditions for successful action.”¹²³

Without giving meaning to action through reason, the statesmen can easily lost in the empirical maze, becoming directionless in the face of the overwhelming facts. They may rely on their intuitions (as Zimmern would say), but it is reason that capacitates the observing mind to penetrate into the essence of politics. Rational Realism, therefore, captures the “timeless feature” distinct from the “ever-changing historical setting”, and provides the most economic route (“rational measure”) to the proposed end, and thereby establishes “conditions for successful action”. For Morgenthau, as for Zimmern, it is essential to ensure that reason is the basis of political conduct – the intellectual's reason should guide the statesman's action. As Morgenthau himself used the metaphor of “photograph and portrait” to illustrate this point further in 1958:

“The difference between the empirical reality of politics and a theory of politics is like the difference between a photograph and a painted portrait. The photograph shows every-thing that can be seen by the naked eye. The

¹²² Morgenthau 1954a: 4-8.

¹²³ Morgenthau 1955b: 455-6, 1958c: 75, 1959a: 17.

painted portrait does not show everything that can be seen by the naked eye, but it shows one thing that the naked eye cannot see: the human essence of the person portrayed. *A theory of politics must want the photographic picture of the political scene to resemble as much as possible in painted portrait*".¹²⁴

For Morgenthau, the rationally right now becomes the ethically good. Because reason can disclose the essence of empirical reality, and expose what "the naked eye cannot see", political conduct ought to conform to the portrait rather than the other way around. A theory making sense of action through reason is also the moral one that should be the arbiter of policy design.¹²⁵ Hence "a theory of politics", Morgenthau declared, "must value that rational nature of its subject matter also for practical reasons. It must assume that a rational policy is of necessity a good policy; for only such a policy minimizes risks and maximizes benefits and, hence, complies both with the moral precept of prudence and the political requirement of success."¹²⁶ "Political realism", as Morgenthau himself wrote in his updated edition of *Politics among Nations* (1960), "maintains not only that theory must focus upon the rational elements of political reality, but also that foreign policy *ought to be* rational in view of its own moral and practical purposes".¹²⁷

In Morgenthau's view, reason (intellect) should not only designate both means and ends to actual conduct of foreign policy in practice, but also be deployed in theory to reveal the essence of the political sphere and to discipline and facilitate such a propitious action. "Far from venting his lust for power on the world," as Nobel once recapped, "Morgenthau's statesman represents the

¹²⁴ Morgenthau 1958c: 75, emphasis added. The last sentence, retained in the third edition of *Politics among Nations* (1960), was first stated prosaically: "Thus a theory of politics must seek to depict the rational essence of its subject matter", in 1955b:456.

¹²⁵ For Morgenthau, "prudence" is consequentialist, carefully weighing "the pros and cons" and heeding "political consequences", see 1952c: 988, 1960a: 119.

¹²⁶ Morgenthau 1958c: 75 More on the moral dimension, see Murray 1996: 81-107.

¹²⁷ Morgenthau 1960c: 8, emphasis added.

essence of rationality”.¹²⁸ Indeed, it is reason that assures theoretical insight, practical acuity and moral soundness.

Nuclear Weapons and the “Providence of Reason” 1952-1964

In parallel with his plea for an ideally “rational” theory and conduct of American foreign policy, Morgenthau’s continued to insist on the need for a Kantian–rational military strategy. Conventionally, Morgenthau has been portrayed as a utilitarian theorist of military strategy (or power) and is accordingly aligned with the utilitarian conception of rationality which defines the Deterrence theories – Aron and Keohane make precisely this argument, as I shall show in the next and final chapter. Nevertheless, Morgenthau himself, in drawing on a Kantian/Clausewitzian perspective, is a fervent critic of rational deterrence theories and argues that any “rational” military strategy must be first of all concerned with the end of war.

From 1952 to 1958, Morgenthau had been constantly warning the US government to guard against two deadly errors *and* to rationally deploy her military force. On the one side, it would be erroneous to assume that nuclear weapons can be actually used for maximizing American interest. Because nuclear weapons would bring incalculably disastrous repercussions, they became unserviceable to such an extent that the whole purpose of war could be eliminated. “War in the atomic age”, as Morgenthau alerted as early as in 1951, “has become the *reduction ad absurdum* of policy itself”.¹²⁹ In 1954 when John Dulles proposed “massive retaliation” as nuclear strategy, Morgenthau was desperate to point out its impossibility because “atomic war is no longer, as traditional war, an instrument of rational policy”.¹³⁰ In addition, the performance of the Eisenhower government in the Geneva Conference (1955) and Suez-Hungary Crisis (1956) also disturbed Morgenthau. In his policy of

¹²⁸ Nobel 1995: 66.

¹²⁹ Morgenthau 1951a: 57-8.

¹³⁰ Morgenthau 1954b: 18.

“new pacifism” – acting as if the eschewal of a nuclear confrontation with the Soviets prevailed over all other American considerations – Eisenhower might have gestured the wrong signs, conceded initiative to the opponent and incurred the very risk he wanted to avoid.

For Morgenthau both nuclear war and the policy of “appeasement” were detrimental to American interests. Yet, what was the way out? “Weakness born of fear, then, is liable to call forth the very thing feared; force rationally employed is the supreme guarantee of peace”.¹³¹ By “force rationally employed”, Morgenthau did *not* suggest, as Craig asserted,¹³² that nuclear weapons could be used as a means to serve the American interest. Rather, for Morgenthau, “a rational instrument of national policies” has to start by questioning the ultimate end of using nuclear war as an instrument. Traditionally, statesmen can be seen as weighing the advantages and risks of employing war to enhance their position. But in the nuclear age,

“The feasibility of all-out atomic war has completely destroyed this rational relation between force and foreign policy. All-out atomic war, being an instrument of universal destruction, obliterates not only the traditional distinction between victor and vanquished, but also the material objective of the war itself.”¹³³

In this instance, speaking of the language of Clausewitz – Clausewitz, drawing on Kant, construes that war should be governed by reason in both purposive and instrumental use¹³⁴ – Morgenthau draws a sharp distinction between military strategy in a prenuclear age and in the nuclear one. In the prenuclear age, war serves as an instrument to break the opponent’s will, whose

¹³¹ Morgenthau 1956a: 134-5, 1957a: 155, 160-1, 1956e: 30.

¹³² Craig 2003: 97-9.

¹³³ Morgenthau 1957a: 156-7.

¹³⁴ Morgenthau reiterated and referred explicitly to Clausewitz’s “wonderful trinity” of war (Gallie 1978: p.50). See e.g. Morgenthau 1958a: 64, 1960b: 11-2, 1952a: 327. See also Lebow 2003: 241, 249, Bakawi 1998: 159-84.

purposeful use can be controlled, and efficiency calculated and compared (with alternative means), by the intellect. In the nuclear age, not only have nuclear weapons obliterated the means of advancing national interest, they have also destroyed the rational end of war itself. The advent of the nuclear weapons demolishes reason's control over their use as a beneficial means. It is because of the obliteration of the ultimate end of nuclear war that the US has to afford "a non-atomic military establishment" and behave in a manner of "a blend of self-restraint and daring" – only then, Morgenthau stressed, could the Americans be militarily strong enough to deter the aggression while not "so strong as to provoke all-out atomic retaliation".¹³⁵

Nevertheless, around the same time as he declared his strategy of "force rationally employed" as conventional deterrence, Morgenthau discerned that there was also a voice propagating "force rationally employed" but having the very distinct denotation from his own. Oskar Morgenstern's *Questions for National Defense* (1959), Thomas Schelling's *The Strategy of Conflict* (1960), and Herman Kahn's *On Thermonuclear War* (1960), astonished Morgenthau for the widespread belief in the employability of nuclear weapons: they were even formulated in a "rational" form just like his own! (I shall say more in the next chapter.) Indeed, even his former student Henry Kissinger's *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (1957), which also admitted of the instrumental utility of a "tactical" nuclear strike, shocked Morgenthau.¹³⁶

It is against this intellectual background, and no less hazardously the Cuba Missile Crisis (1962) which nearly brings Chicken Game into reality, that Morgenthau undertakes a Kantian critique of the instrumental conception of reason. For Morgenthau, the fundamental errors which Kahn and the like committed are twofold.

¹³⁵ Morgenthau 1957a: 161, 1956a: 140. "Effective diplomacy and strong conventional forces", as Morgenthau (1969, 242) would restate in his last suggestion on *A New Foreign Policy for the United States*, "are an insurance against the suicidal absurdity of nuclear war".

¹³⁶ See Morgenthau's review (1958d). Morgenthau seemed to engage extensively with Rational Deterrence, his survey in Morgenthau 1965a.

First, to think about nuclear weapons, Morgenthau stressed, was to consider what ends they would serve. As long as they make war itself meaningless in end, obliterating any intelligibility, they can never serve as “a rational instrument of national policy, but as a suicidal absurdity”.¹³⁷ Military-strategic actions have to be designated with a view of the ultimate end. True, a state that first commits to unbearable cost when playing a Chicken game can deter the opponent if both are “rational” – “rational” denotes, as Kahn himself conceived and Morgenthau perfectly understood, a constricted vision of cost-benefit calculation.¹³⁸ But as long as nuclear weapons nullify the *constitutive* precondition as an intelligible and meaningful instrument, their regulative, calculable, efficiency could (or rather, *should not*) neither be attested to, nor tested against other alternatives. The “rational” deterrence theorists have privileged the instrumentality of reason to such an extent that like the “Idealists”, they have established a superstition as if political action is solely governed by the intellect and its instrumental use:

“What characterizes contemporary theories of international relations is the attempt to use the tools of modern economic analysis in a modified form in order to understand international relations [...] In such a theoretical scheme, nations confront each other not as living historic entities with all their complexities but as rational abstractions, after the model of ‘economic man’, playing games of military and diplomatic chess according to a rational calculus that exists nowhere but in the theoretician’s mind.”¹³⁹

Nations, like men, are also multidimensional beings. The economic man is only one mode of being.

¹³⁷ Morgenthau 1963: 263.

¹³⁸ Kahn 1960: 119ff, 172.

¹³⁹ Morgenthau 1967a: 244.

Second, Morgenthau criticizes the fact that behind Kahn and the like's apparently "rational" demonstration there is an underlying emotional commitment to show the employability of nuclear weapons. Motivated by the urge to show that states can use nuclear weapons in accordance with calculation, the deterrence theorists had been "fascinated by the rational model of the natural sciences". As a consequence they disregarded the multicity of being of nations, and overlooked "the very nature of foreign policy and military policy with all its ambiguities, its contingencies, and the bunches derived from them militates against it". For Morgenthau, the emotional, once disguised as the intellectual, can simply conceal the "stark facts" that the latter would otherwise have revealed. Once again, Morgenthau considered that he is witnessing "the scientist [sic] theories of our day pretend to be capable of manipulating with scientific precision a society of sovereign nations".¹⁴⁰ Their subsequent propagation and exploitation can only turn those theorists into the "proponent and ideologue of political and military policies".¹⁴¹

Morgenthau, to sum up, is a thinker of Kantian reason. First, although he acknowledges that passion is a constituent of human existence and the passion for power makes political conduct characteristic, Morgenthau still insists that political action should be understood as well as guided by reason. Second, reason, as Morgenthau presents it, can objectively penetrate into facts and events, making them intelligible, and forge an intersubjective link between the scholar and statesman, connecting the two intellectually together. Third, for Morgenthau, foreign policy and military strategy should be designated on the basis of reason. Far from being a theorist of utilitarian rationality depicting political conduct simplistically as the instrumental maximization of power, Morgenthau urges that a rational action must not only economize action efficiently but also take the end into account. Only actions based on reason can satisfy the moral precept.

¹⁴⁰ Morgenthau 1963: 245; 1961b: 252, 1965b: 281.

¹⁴¹ Morgenthau 1964: 101.

(iii) The Revival of Kantian Reason since the 1980s

With the flow of game theory into IR, a process which began in the 1960s, the old conception of reason as a rational faculty of man (which harnessed his passions, facilitated peaceful discussion and argumentation), gradually broke down. The same fate transpired for the alternative notion of ranking the most beneficial course of action and making a choice to maximize interest. Reason, of which such IR thinkers as Zimmern, Carr, Morgenthau, Herz, and Kenan, had spoken in some depth, was subsequently scienticized into “rationality”.

Yet, from 1981 onwards, the Kantian conception of reason experienced a revival. This resurgence of Kantian idea was accomplished through the influence of Habermas’ idea of communicative rationality. In what follows I shall mainly focus on two thinkers, showing how they have both employed Habermas’ communicative rationality to resurge the conception of reason shared by the “Idealists” and Morgenthau. The first thinker is Richard Ashley. The second is Andrew Linklater. In addition to Ashley and Linklater, an additional group of scholars are also reexamined, on the basis that they briefly illustrate the extraordinary similarity between their conceptions of rationality and the one beheld by the “Idealists”. These German Idealists, to be sure, have not realized their remarkable resemblance with British Liberal-Institutionalists in the conception of rationality.

Early Ashley, Practical Reason, and the Habermasian Reading of Morgenthau

It has now become standard practice to reference Ashley’s articles of the early 1980s as the commencement of the “critical international theory” movement. “Political Realism and Human Interest” (1981), “Three Modes of Economicism” (1983), “The Poverty of Neorealism” (1984) – all these works are rightly

celebrated. In introducing Habermas' theory of practical and technical reason, Ashley criticized the fact that the North American IR theories had become too saturated with the instrumental idea of rationality.

But in what way does Ashley in his early works *revive* the Kantian conception of reason? And on what basis? In Ashley's view, the introduction of Habermas's theory of rationality demonstrates that many "North American proponents of neorealism", although claiming "to carry forward a rich intellectual tradition of long standing [classical Realism]", have in fact betrayed the Realist tradition "by reducing political practice to an economic logic" and "neuter[ed] the critical faculties".¹⁴² The Neorealist pathological belief in technical rationality, for Ashley, can be diagnosed by Habermas' theory of rationality. The ultimate issue is to realize that to construe politics as irrelevant with the end of conduct or intellectual critique is a betrayal of the traditional conception of reason that prevails within the work of canonical old Realist scholars such as Morgenthau.

For Ashley, the Kantian conception demands revival; more precisely, it is the intersubjective/dialogical dimension of Kantian reason that requires rediscovery. And Ashley can be seen as proceeding in two steps to resurrect the Kantian conception (especially its intersubjective part).

In the first step – in a "symposium in honor of Hans Morgenthau" – Ashley recovers Morgenthau's whole Kantian conception without particular emphasis on each side, arguing that Morgenthau's rational Realism exemplifies both technical and practical reason. Morgenthau's theory of Realism, which aspires to reveal the objective laws of politics rooted in human nature and imposes intellectual discipline on the observer (second rhetorical move), is viewed by Ashley as attempting at intelligible control over politics. In this aspect, Morgenthau's rational Realism is technically rational. The technical-rational dimension of Morgenthau's Realism is to "constitute knowledge in order to

¹⁴² Ashley 1984: 227-8. Notice Ashley's reference to "Neorealism". In his "Poverty of Neorealism" Ashley (1984: 298) used the term pointing to Waltz, Gilpin, Krasner, Keohane, Modelski, and Kindleberger, and earlier he (1983: 481) used the term "new utilitarianism" to include Waltz, Gilpin, Krasner, Keohane, and Mesquita (cf. Gilpin 1986: 301-2).

expand powers of technical control over an objectified reality”, to enhance “efficiency of means” and to achieve “objectified necessity”.¹⁴³ Furthermore, Morgenthau’s claim that a theory can enable scholars to stand on the shoulder of statesmen, intersubjectively retrace, anticipate or even have a better understanding of their own action, to merge the “interpreter” with the “interpreted” (third rhetorical move), is an instantiation of practical reason.¹⁴⁴ The practically rational Realism “stresses the ‘uniquely human’ character of its subject matter”, and coincides with the view that “human beings can converse, remember, know, expect”. Practical reason, as a defining feature of classical Realism, demands one “behave as a worthy member of one’s traditional community [Realism], with its intersubjective and consensually endorsed norms, rights, meanings”.¹⁴⁵ Practical reason warrants a cognitive interest of mutual understanding, of reaching consensus between the agents acting and observing within “the intersubjectivity of the traditional community of statesmen”.¹⁴⁶

Ashley’s interpretation of Morgenthau as a dual rationalist incurred skepticism, apprehension and even silence, since most IR theorists then believed that Morgenthau denied the significance of reason or thought of it merely in a technical sense.¹⁴⁷ Yet Ashley captured Morgenthau’s Kantian conception of reason and highlighted its interpretive/dialogic dimension. In front of reality and facts, reason can be objectively used to exercise control over objects. In the relation to other subjects, reason can be used to converse, to act on an “intersubjective and consensually endorsed norms”. But the Kantian conception revived by Ashley is also different from Morgenthau’s own in two aspects. First, whereas in Morgenthau’s Kantian language, intelligibility, (objective) controllability, and (intersubjective) reflectiveness form a coherent

¹⁴³ Ashley 1981: 210.

¹⁴⁴ Ashley 1981: 212-3.

¹⁴⁵ Ashley 1981: 211.

¹⁴⁶ Ashley 1981: 214, 217,

¹⁴⁷ Ashley 1981: esp. 208-9. Herz (1981) turned Ashley down by criticizing Ashley’s interpretation of his thought as “an incorrect reading of my theoretical approach”. C. Weber (2010: 984) recalled that “there was nothing obvious about Ashley’s insights when he introduced them into North American IR in the early 1980s”.

whole, it is in this revived Kantian conception that the unity is eroded, replaced by a tension. Technical reason, which presupposes the objectification of an outer world over which man wants to control, is claimed to be fundamentally different from the practical one that endeavors to reach consensus with another subject without trying to control anything. This bifurcation between the two becomes more evident in comparison with Zimmern's expectation that the cultivation of individual and collective reason (mutual understanding and dialogue) *is* for controlling political events. Second, whereas for Morgenthau reason is intimately connected with the problem of conduct, Ashley applied practical reason with a predominating concern with knowledge.¹⁴⁸

Ashley's second move is to condemn the fact that the Neorealists have deviated from such a balanced conception, pursuing the power of technical-rational control while completely ignoring the practical-rational dimension. Hence in the "Poverty of Neorealism" (1984), an article which stimulated an enormous response within the field of IR, Ashley reiterated the significance of the intersubjective dimension of the Kantian conception, rebuking the Neorealists for committing four crimes, all caused by their ignorance of the intersubjective dimension of Kantian reason.

First, in contrast to the Neorealist "statism" that rules out the legitimacy of *human* interest, the old Realists are "very much animated by a practical interest in knowledge" for improving human condition. By citing Gilpin's statement as foil,¹⁴⁹ Ashley declaimed against any technical use of reason:

"With Gilpin, one can remember classical realism not as an embodiment of a continuing dialectical struggle between absolutist darkness and

¹⁴⁸ In addition, it seems that Ashley's conceptions of reason displays a tendency to extend in its denotation. Whereas in Morgenthau the reference to reason is defined as an intellectual faculty and its use, Ashley seems to use it referring to a general certain trait of Morgenthau's thought rather than the latter's specific application of reason.

¹⁴⁹ Gilpin's (1981: 226) original statement is very Zimmernian: "Embedded in most social sciences and in the study of international relations is the belief that through science and reason the human race can gain control over its destiny. Through the advancement of knowledge, humanity can learn to master the blind forces of change and to construct a science of peace. [...] Political Realism is, of course, the very embodiment of this faith in reason and science."

bourgeois Enlightenment but only as a product of the latter [...] Its [classical Realist] discourse is now frozen in acquiescence to the Cold War conditions of the revolutions it recalled: competition among states mutually preparing for war. As Gilpin writes, 'The advance of technology may open up opportunities for mutual benefit, but it also increases the power available for political struggle. The advance of human reason and understanding will not end this power struggle, but it does make possible a more enlightened understanding and pursuit of national self-interest'. How painful this is: the revolutionary science of peace has become a technology of the state!"¹⁵⁰

Beneath Ashley's polemic is his insight: whereas Gilpin's conception only aims at efficient control over objects, the old Kantian conception has a particular concern with the end of conduct. The instrumental use of human reason should be constrained by the end that human reason serves. The bourgeois Enlightenment, if having no humanistic purpose to center on and giving overarching meaning to every use of reason, will bring about absolutist darkness. Human reason, rather than serving as an instrument for the state to exploit, should be used for promoting "the revolutionary science of peace", linking scholars and statesman into the same intellectual process and develop prudent statesmanship. For Ashley, the classical Realists' practical reason demands "judgment on ends" of political conduct where "normative structures [must be] transcending and irreducible to individual wants and needs".¹⁵¹

Second, unlike the "structuralism" of Neorealism that embodies in "formal logic", "set of rules external to practice", and unhistorical "frozen category", the classical Realists have offered a "practical structure" or "practical scheme".¹⁵² Whereas the Neorealists assume that interest maximization is sufficient to show

¹⁵⁰ Ashley 1984: 263-4.

¹⁵¹ Ashley 1984: 243 (in Keohane 1986: 274).

¹⁵² Ashley 1984: 266-7.

how states behave within the anarchical structure, the old Realists' rational theory is aware of the dynamic relation between the intellect and reality. The interplay between the intellectual theory and daily-changed reality eludes any attempt to explain all actions in terms of structure. The rational Realism is a "more-or-less consensual recognition of the truth of a dialectical scheme", which "disallows any final closure on a singular, contradiction-free truth".¹⁵³

Third and fourth are the errors of "utilitarianism" and "positivism", each of which, when perpetrated by the Neorealists, has resulted in an economicized theory of political conduct and objectified human reason. For Ashley, Morgenthau's criticism of the deterrence theorists (states playing game in the theorists' mind in the model of economic man) is a prophetic demonstration of "the classical Realist repudiation of Neorealism".¹⁵⁴ In order to remedy the utilitarian flaw and grasp the political nature of action, Ashley once again invokes Morgenthau's rational Realism where the scholar and statesman are linked together. Political conducts cannot be understood from an outsider's point of view. Rather, the intersubjective dimension of Kantian reason unites the statesmen and scholar into the same process through their intellect:

"Evolving its theory while peering 'over the shoulder of the statesman when he writes his dispatches,' classical realism can advance its theory no farther than competent statesmen, in the course of their practice, are able to theorize about themselves and their circumstances. [...]. Thus, while classical realism is rich with insights into political practice, it fares no better than neorealism as a scientific *theory* of international politics. Though it closes on an understanding that is far truer to the traditional practice of world politics, it is no less closed"¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Ashley 1984: 271-2, emphasis added.

¹⁵⁴ Ashley 1984: 279.

¹⁵⁵ Ashley 1984: 274-5.

This unification of scholar and statesman is so intersubjectively perfect that where “competent statesmen are prepared to recognize problems, classical realism will give voice to problems”; but if “competent statesmen have an interest in silence, classical realism will be silent too”.¹⁵⁶

“The Poverty of Neorealism” has reached the climax of “critical theory” as revived the Kantian conception of reason, especially the latter’s concern with the end of action and the intersubjective dimension. In his later works, however, it seems that Ashley’s conception of reason ended up with the negation of both.¹⁵⁷ Thus marked by his 1988 essay “Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique”, Ashley became a critic of the Kantian conception, both in its technical and practical dimension. Before moving to Linklater, Let me reveal this change by exercising an Ashleyian double reading of Ashley’s own double reading of the concept of the rational:

“The sign of sovereignty betokens a rational identity: a homogenous and continuous presence that is hierarchically ordered”, presupposing “a principle of interpretation that makes it possible to discipline the understanding of ambiguous events and impose a distinction: a distinction between what can be represented as rational and meaningful and what must count as external, dangerous, and anarchic”. It amounts to “a unique and coherent rational narrative of order”, and a foundational principle “to discriminate the normal, the rational, and the necessary from the arbitrary and the dangerous events that must be brought under rational control”. The sovereign voice “is rational and meaningful in the representation offered by a text or discourse”, a “unique, autonomous, and rational source – some fixed authorial personality, some already given referent reality [...]” This “rational sovereign voice” voices only “as a pure presence, a

¹⁵⁶ Ashley 1984: 274.

¹⁵⁷ C. Weber 2010: 979.

sovereign identity that might be a coherent source of meaning and an agency of the power of reason in international history".¹⁵⁸

Reason still retains its meaning. Yet for Ashley this intelligibility is achieved by the discipline of the equivocal, contingent, and anarchical. Ashley finally becomes a critic of Kantian reason.¹⁵⁹

Andrew Linklater, "Higher Rationality", and the Transformation of Political Community (1998)

For Andrew Linklater the practical-rational rebellion of Ashley against the dominance of technical rationality demonstrates the "intellectual exclusion" within the IR "community".¹⁶⁰ Like Ashley, Linklater also wants to use practical reason – or dialogic ethics – to construct dialogue and correct the error committed by such scholars as Waltz to "reduce rational political action in international relations to technical considerations of national power and self-interest".¹⁶¹ But unlike Ashley who wants to recover/promote dialogically

¹⁵⁸ Ashley 1988: 230-4. Ashley always use his own words as quotations.

¹⁵⁹ Within the upcoming decade after Ashley's "Untying the Sovereign Problematique" (1989-1999), Anglophone IR witnessed the rapid spread of "postmodernist" spirit. *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (1989), the special issue in *International Studies Quarterly* (1990) oversaw by Ashley and Walker, Walker's *Inside/Outside* (1992), David Campbell's *Writing Security* (1992, esp. 56-9, 65-7, 73-4, 152-3) – by all these work the authors had devoted too seriously, and too frequently, to the problem of rationality that it deserves lengthy dissection in the future. Let me highlight two points about why I shall not continue on this vein but, why it deserves reconsideration at some point. First, many poststructuralists, although being critical towards the Kantian conception of reason, still shares the very conception with the one by Morgenthau. Reason is defined as a secure, coherent, and continuous source to make events theoretically intelligible, practically controllable; it can provide efficient means to control the outer world as well as point to the preexisted and prefixed end (the ordered, hierarchical, rather than contingent, anarchical – recall Morgenthau's dictum that establishing a hierarchical order is the first step towards framing a rational foreign policy). Second, Far from being purely "irrational" (see e.g. Halliday 1993: 38-45), the "postmodernists" were quite divided in their outlooks. On the one hand there was the demarcation made by Der Derian (1992: 8) that "if one is to find a 'genuine research program' it is better to take the enlightened road of rationalist reflection than the benighted wood of poststructuralist reflectivity". On other there was Campbell's (1998: 210-5, at 214-5) argument – by drawing on Foucault's reflection on Kant's replies to "Was ist Aufklärung?" – that postmodernism is rather a rediscovery of "a particular mode of philosophical inquiry" that interrogates what has been unhistorically and unreflectively taken for granted. To be postmodernist is to philosophize, to debunk the reified nature of reality and "things". "This means", reemphasized Campbell, "that the central (but all-too-often forgotten) feature of the Enlightenment is being practiced better by the 'postmodern' critics than by the self-proclaimed rationalist defenders of the faith".

¹⁶⁰ Linklater 1992: 83.

¹⁶¹ Linklater 1998: 16. Discursive ethics is a variant of communicative rationality or practical reason, which Linklater, like the early Ashley, draws from the work of Habermas. Notice that Ashley's own use of Habermas' theory of rationality is equally inspiring for Linklater (1995: 256-8).

mutual understanding within a (Realist) community between the scholar and statesman, Linklater proposes to open dialogue between different nationals and between the “communities” which they inhabit.¹⁶² In a similar application of Ashley’s attempt to expel technical-rational control in politics, Linklater endeavors to at least alleviate the degree of technical-rational control which communities exercise over citizens, and at best to emancipate the citizens from the instrumental control of their political associations.

For Linklater, his endeavor to use practical reason to promote dialogue between nationals and communities is fundamentally a recovery of the “old idealist program”.¹⁶³ And in *The Transformation of Political Community* (1998), Linklater eventually resurrected the old Kantian conception of reason, in a similar but also different manner to that of the British Liberal Institutionalists’ usage. The resurgent idea of Kantian reason is used narrowly in extent but more dynamically and intensively in degree.

First, like the Idealists who regarded the rational as ethically right that should prevail, Linklater argued that he was normatively pursuing “a rational morality with universal significance”.¹⁶⁴ For Linklater, the attempt to enlarge communitarian bonds into a universally cosmopolitan tie must be based on reason: it is a pursuit of “rational” morality that requires the use of dialogic ethics to promote dialogue, mutual understanding and the eradication of exclusions. Parallel to the Idealists, the dialogic ethic is firstly defined as a dialogue that should recourse to reason and discussion, rather than “a trial of strength” or demonstration of prejudged superiority. It is secondly a dialogue that should turn the peoples themselves into “co-legislators within wider communities of discourse” and create “a dialogic cosmopolitanism”, granting equal access to all. By quoting Lyotard as endorsement, Linklater poses the argument that “all

¹⁶² Linklater 1998: esp. 113-9, 123-33. Communities, be they collection of civilizations or specific grouping, all are social bonds that associate and dissociate, or “systems of inclusion and exclusion” that segment and integrate at a certain tier.

¹⁶³ This was originally proclaimed in Linklater 1992: 98.

¹⁶⁴ Linklater 1998: 76.

human beings have an equal right to take part in dialogue and to ‘establish their community by contract’ using ‘reason and debate’.”¹⁶⁵ It is thirdly a dialogue that “assesses the rationality of the practices of exclusion”.¹⁶⁶ By “universalizing the communication community”,¹⁶⁷ the peoples discriminated, repressed, excluded (both within and outside the community) would be able to use dialogue to scrutinize and eradicate those fetters. Linklater, employing Habermas’ theory, speaks in a very “Idealistic” way.

Second, Linklater’s rational morality, despite closely resembling the work of the Liberal Institutionalists in many senses, also differ in four key respects. First is Linklater’s assertion that the use of reason – rational debate and dialogue – is directed not only to inter-national but also to inner-national relations. Dialogue should be conducted both among different nationals as well as *within* them, between men as between all people (women, immigrants, unprivileged class, gays and lesbians).¹⁶⁸

Second, whereas the Idealists evidence a clear understanding that the cultivation of human reason is the ultimate end of their program, Linklater sometimes views it as “the preferred means” and frequently demonstrates his commitment to the “universalistic conceptions of ethics and dialogue” as an ultimate end.¹⁶⁹ Unlike Ashley, who denies any possibility of the instrumentality of practical reason, Linklater envisages that dialogic ethics *can* be itself an instrument, by which subjects decide the rationale of exclusionary system.¹⁷⁰ In contrast to Ashley who later leans completely on the antithetical side of the Enlightenment, Linklater seem to have resolvedly committed to the Enlightenment project as an unyielding end.

Third, whereas the Idealists envisage a complex program – broad in extent – to cultivate individual reason to combat impulses (education), to develop

¹⁶⁵ Linklater 1998: 98.

¹⁶⁶ Linklater 1998: 92, 85, 87-8, 216.

¹⁶⁷ Linklater 1998: 79.

¹⁶⁸ Linklater 1998: *passim*.

¹⁶⁹ Linklater 1997: 338, 1998: 10.

¹⁷⁰ Linklater 1998: 109.

collective reason through public opinion, mutual understanding that many enhance moral interdependence and the collective control over events, Linklater's recovered program downplays the significance of individual cultivations of reason.

Finally, in outlining a more dynamic and reciprocal understanding, Linklater goes much further than the "Idealists" (and, to take another example, Angell) in his articulation of dialogue and mutual understanding. Linklater argued against the idea that "all human beings have the rational faculties" enabling them to grasp universal moral truths", as if "*individual* reason can discover an Archimedean moral standpoint" which aligns itself with everyone.¹⁷¹ In contrast to Kant's theory of reason which is not dynamic enough, Linklater's rational morality is pursued by the "dialogic *encounter*" that knits dialogue between the similar likes and enhances the intersubjective exchange of discourse:

"Dialogic encounters which promote greater diversity in this way may never come to an end, and no lasting resolution of the ethical differences between human subjects can ever be anticipated, as Habermas has argued. The idea of moral progress retains its meaning but it is neither associated with the conviction that ultimate moral truths reside in any one culture nor linked with the Archimedean supposition that immutable universal moral principles are built into some conception of human rationality which transcend history. What moral progress refers to is the widening of the circle of those who have rights to participate in dialogue [...]." ¹⁷²

This emphasis on the intersubjectively dynamic dimension of rationality provides Linklater's account with a tremendous historical color (In chapter four,

¹⁷¹ Linklater 1998: 48 (emphasis added), 88-91, also 34-45, 64-71, 79-85, but notice in 81 Linklater employed the term "reasonable" instead of "rational".

¹⁷² Linklater 1998: 96

I shall say more on this historical conception of reason). Rather than assuming that reason unfolds as a teleological purpose of history where “reason itself has a history and conceptions of freedom are revised and enlarged over time”, Linklater points to the human endeavor as a constant process to approach the ideal, which bears resemblance to Kant’s own design.¹⁷³

It is in the view of dialogue as an encounter within the historical process that Linklater appears to depart most radically from the Idealists. Whereas for the Idealists dialogic rationality was achievable by discipline and contrivance, Linklater wanted instead to exploit the “possibilities of higher forms of freedom and rationality which were immanent within modern societies”, using a “higher rationality of efforts to bridge the gulf between actuality and potentiality”.¹⁷⁴ For Linklater, the cultivation of reason needs to exploit the *existing* systems of inclusion and exclusion, not by pioneering new forms of organizations to do so.¹⁷⁵ Hence, in contrast to the Liberal Institutionalists who expect that the League can teach the common man to become sensible, and who argue that the intellectuals (epistemic communities) can play a crucial part to arouse their recognition of the problem of “small-scale man in a large-scale world”, Linklater bestows hope solely on the existing communities themselves. Linklater undertakes a sociological analysis to show how the “paradoxical nature” of the communities, standing “at the intersection of several rationalization processes”, can be exploited.¹⁷⁶ Drawing on Habermas, Benjamin Nelson and Martin Wight, Linklater argues that the “intrinsic rationality” as dialogic potential is contained in the society or civilization and can accordingly be universalized into the communication community. By reversing the process studied by Michael Mann

¹⁷³ Linklater 1998: 89.

¹⁷⁴ Linklater 1998: 22, 159. The last quotation is what Linklater let the young Hegelians and Frankfurt Theorists speak for him, see originally Linklater 1996: 202-3.

¹⁷⁵ Linklater 1998: 3-4. Linklater’s sociological is in fact the combination of historical and sociological in Aron’s scheme, as the former professed: “sociological investigations reveals that present structures are not natural and permanent but have a history”; and “identifying the seeds of future change in existing social order”, he went on, “is a key feature of sociological enquiry”.

¹⁷⁶ Linklater 1998: 147.

and Charles Tilly, Linklater demonstrates how communities can lessen their social, religious and ideological control over the citizens.¹⁷⁷

Viewed from the perspective of reason, Linklater has partially recovered the old Idealist program. In extent, the application of reason in Linklater's program, although entailing more subjects (inter- and inner communities, from man to all citizens) in appearance, still concentrates too much on the communitarian level. Indeed, for the Idealists, the most crucial point is to point to the force in the mind of the citizens: it is not the rationalization process of communities but citizens that give community both their substance and their particular tone.

"Let's Argue?" Communicative Rationality and German Idealism

Like their English precursors, the German Idealists also conceive of rationality as a search for reaching consensus by means of persuasion, dialogue and intellectual argumentation. Although their inspiration is Habermas and his "communicative" idea of rationality, what is presupposed is almost the same as the English Idealists' understanding. Communicative theory, implying communicative rationality, is a theory of and for *communication*. Indeed, even a glance at the titles of these representative works will be indicative enough (with regard to their position): Thomas Risse' "Let's Argue" (2000), Harald Muller's "International Relations as Communicative Action" (2001) and "Arguing, Bargaining and All That" (2004), Marc Lynch's "Why Engage?" (2002), Corneliu Bjola's "Legitimizing the Use of Force in International Politics" (2005), Nicole Deitelhoff's "The Discursive Process of Legalization" (2009).¹⁷⁸

The German Idealists' conception of rationality bears remarkable resemblance with the English in two places. First is the similar view of the end and means of rationality. In its ultimate end, communicative rationality facilitates actors to reach consensus. It aims to solve problems through a contestation of

¹⁷⁷ Linklater 1998: 144-53, 124-8.

¹⁷⁸ In addition to these, see also Grobe 2010.

persuasion rather than of strength as means. Although for the German Idealists it is the states rather than the “plain man” that can be the subject of reason, the ultimate objective of using reason remains alike. “International politics consists predominantly of actions that take the form of language”, Muller argued, and these actions were “*oriented* to reaching understanding, or communicative action”. “Politics”, he went on, “must for the most part be produced through understanding via the medium of language”.¹⁷⁹ “The goal of the discursive interaction is to achieve argumentative consensus with the other”, Risse pinpointed, “not to push through one’s own view of the world or moral values”.¹⁸⁰ In a remarkable similarity to Russell (recall his remark on persuasion), Risse claimed that communicative rationality was to “seek a reasoned consensus” where the agents “are themselves prepared to be persuaded”.¹⁸¹ Or, as Deitelhoff articulated in Angell’s tone, “in argumentative rationality the goal is to arrive at a shared understanding of the nature of a situation”.¹⁸² The goal of international political action is to reach mutual understanding with each other.

Second, communicative rationality, like “hue and cry” (Zimmern), is also capable of clarifying states’ legal duty towards the occurrence of war and enforcing the international rule of law. Although unlike the British Liberal-Institutionalists (who anticipate the ultimate triumph of the rule of law) the German Idealists acknowledge the imperfectness of communication, they still also bestow a similarly enforcing function on reason. Bjola, in his assessment of the legitimacy of war, contended that the question of whether the actors “using argumentative reasoning for reaching consensus on the use of force” was an indispensable criterion.¹⁸³ The Iraq War (2003), compared with the one in Kosovo (1999), was deficient in legitimacy for its abandonment of equal access to argumentation that could at least expose war to a trial of opinion. In

¹⁷⁹ Muller 2001: 161, 174 emphasis added.

¹⁸⁰ Risse 2000: 9.

¹⁸¹ Risse 2000: 9.

¹⁸² Deitelhoff 2009: 35

¹⁸³ Bjola 2003: 280. Bjola clarifies that he is concerned with moral rather than legal legitimacy.

her study of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Deitelhoff argued that the voices of the sub- and trans- national organizations played a crucial role in directing attention to the rule of international law. “In the absence of a common identity or sense of “we-ness” as well as a democratic polity at the global level,” as Deitelhoff argued in a Zimmernian tone, “a major source of legitimacy of international governance seems to rest on ‘the sober power of reason and good argument’.”¹⁸⁴

What particularly differentiates the German Idealists from the Liberal Institutionalists is that whereas reason and its cultivation are crucial for the British Liberal-Institutionalists as a *political* project, the introduction of communicative rationality is used for waging a war in the *academic* front. In the former case, to change political agenda is overriding: the common man, through the cultivation of reason, can reach an intelligible (mutual) understanding of the graveness of the international problem, and then gradually take control over the events. For the German Idealists, the ultimate objective is to supersede the Rational-Choice and Constructivists *explanations*. Their principal intention is to criticize the manner in which Game Theory and Rational Choice Theory assume reticent actors, thus maximizing their individual interests without emphasizing the exchange of communication.¹⁸⁵ In the next chapter, I shall expound the origin of the “mute” assumption of actors – an assumption deliberately set by the early Game Theorists to tackle the Cold War dilemma – and explicate how Rational Choice and Game Theory becomes principal targets for disciplinary attack.

(iv) Conclusion

¹⁸⁴ Deitelhoff 2009: 62.

¹⁸⁵ “All rational choice models”, Muller (2001: 160) argued, “have one remarkable feature in common: the players are mute”. This criticism is somehow unjustified in dualistic sense. Second, the “hot line” opened after the Cuba Missile Crisis in 1962 attested, as Raymond Aron (1963: 59) once remarked, to the fact that neither side expected “the end of the dialogue and the onset of unlimited violence” in front of a potential escalation into nuclear disaster.

A “Grammatical” Dissection of the Kantian Dialect

In the preceding sections I have demonstrated the existence of a Kantian language of reason. The first feature of the Kantian conception of reason is that the human intellect stands in a position vis-à-vis passion, impulses, instincts which manifest as the violent. A rational man will not be “a fighting animal, emotional, passionate”, led by “unruly instincts”, “herd instinct”, “lust for power”, “animus dominandi”, “sentimentalism”, “emotionalism”. Conversely, Kantian reason requires actions to be based on “knowledge”, “judgment”, “understanding”, where the intellect stands for the “patient, collected” and is capable of discerning “end in every beginning”. Rather than letting passion drive the use of political power, political action should be based on “the discipline of the intellect”. Rather than resorting to the trail of physical strength, political conduct can be undertaken “through reason”, intellectual “dialogue”, “debate”, and “communication”.

Second, there are two ways of using reason. The direction of reason towards objects will give rise to “control over events” and provide “disinterested and reflective” observation. In addition, it will provide an “instrumentality” for the promotion of peace, orient an observer to find a way in the empirical “maze” and reveal the essence of politics through the portrayal of the nature of politics. In its use towards human subjects, reason gives rise to “persuasion” (or the “appeal to reason”, “voice of reason”) and knits intellectual relations together and links the subjects – scholars and statesman – together. Human reason should be “practically” used for forging a hermeneutic consensus between the theorists and statesmen, between the outsiders and insiders of a community, and between states that endeavor to reach an agreement on the end/s of their conduct. Notice, however, that the thinkers who draw on Habermas tend to consider the strategic (technical) and communicative (practical) uses of the cognitive to be incompatible.

Third, conduct based on intellectual designation is truly moral. For the Idealists, reason (and “conscience”) is the “arbiter in human conduct”. Even Morgenthau the hard-headed Realist is not immune from this presupposition. There is an underlying presumption that “a theory of politics must value that rational nature of its subject matter also for practical reasons”, an assumption which in turn leads to the assertion that “a rational policy is of necessity a good policy”; this is precisely because “such a policy minimizes risks and maximizes benefits” and “complies both with the moral precept of prudence and the political requirement of success.” In Linklater’s case, the transformation of community into dialogic cosmopolis is defined as a pursuit of “rational morality with universal significance”.

The Fall and Resurgence of Kantian Reason

Both the fall of the Kantian conception of reason in the 1960s and 1970s, and its subsequent revival through Habermasian theory after the 1980s, have profoundly impacted on subsequent articulations of Kantian reason within the field of International Relations.

First, notice that a different conception of reason reflects a distinct purpose of the academic study (discipline). This point has been insightfully developed by Ashley. On comparing the two conceptions – cultivating dialogue/mutual understanding among the people, and maximizing states’ interest under constraints (I discuss further in the next chapter) – against each other, it becomes evident that the application of the former has a quite different purpose from that of the latter. The former is more activist, inclusive, and oriented to the “common man”. The latter is “statist” (to Ashley’s term), exclusive, and directed to the interest of the state. The conventional IR historiography and textbooks normally introduce the discipline as the academic study devoting to curing the disease of war, and stops with that, thus failing to highlight the changing purpose of the discipline with the changing conception of reason.

Second, through the influence of Habermas, the Kantian conception of reason experiences a resurgence; the old conception of reason as dialogue and mutually intellectual understanding restores the significance of the concept. While one can assert that the communicative idea of rationality is entirely novel, it does have remarkable similarity to the one conceived both by the “Idealists” and Cold War Realists. It should be noted that Ashley, Linklater and the German Idealists always draw a sharp, ontological, line between the dual uses of reason – this is the problem of sectorised structure. In the old Kantian-rational conception, the division between the technical/instrumental use of reason (towards object) and practical use (towards subject) is neither ontological nor viewed as incompatible. For Zimmern, the intersubjective understanding and dialogue can rather enhance the human control over events. For Morgenthau, the (scholar’s) use of reason towards object – to understand political events and reality – is inextricably linked with the use of reason towards another subject, forging an intersubjective dialogue with statesman. In Ashley and Linklater’s accounts, however, the division between technical and practical use is ontological and unbridgeable.

Third, Kantian reason in its old form has a human and masculine foundation. Without the action of the common man, neither international organization can work, nor can international peace be genuinely achieved. It is *man’s* (or *statesman’s*) intellectual capacity. It entails a profound problem of masculinity. In Linklater’s work, however, this bias has been modified.

History

The thinkers who conceive of reason in a Kantian manner have different views of history. For Zimmern and Linklater, for instance, reason can develop in correspondence with the cultivation of individual and collective reason in a given period. The relations between as well as within communities can be transformed with the flow of time. Yet for Morgenthau, the intellect can be

historically transcendent. The observer can “put himself into the place of the statesman – past, present, or future”, retracing or anticipating what the statesman has done or will be doing. As I shall show in chapter four, it is Morgenthau’s distinct emphasis on the transcendent nature of reason that distinguishes his accounts from many of his contemporaries (notably Raymond Aron and Martin Wight’s “historicized” ideas of reason).

Is the concept of Kantian reason still useful, if the two actors are trapped in a situation where they can neither have a rational discussion (communicate) with each other because of enmity forbidding such behavior, nor resort to violence to resolve their antagonism, and neither their intellect is dispensable for the pursuit of interest, nor their intellectual has been disciplined enough to harness emotions and passions which are sometimes dominated by entrenched ideologies? Can the Kantian conception of reason tackle this dilemma? To look for an answer, I shall turn to chapter two, *utilitarian reason*.

Chapter II. Utilitarian Reason

Having examined Kantian reason, I shall proceed in this chapter to the second language: utilitarian reason. Utilitarian reason, which has also been called “instrumental rationality”, “economic reason”, “technical rationality”, or the “logic of consequence”, refers to the maximization of interest under constraints.¹

The language of utilitarian rationality has three defining characteristics. First, it enunciates the *maximization* of interest, utility, values, or preferences. Whether deterring an aggressive action, waging a war, creating an international institution, or designing foreign policy, all conducts can be conceptualized as the choices of the course of action that are expected to bring about the optimal consequence (subsequent to a ranking of the possible outcomes). Notice the differences which distinguish the Kantian conception and its utilitarian counterpart. Whereas the Kantian language does not deny the significance of the pursuit of interest and requires the pursuit to be undertaken with a view to promoting the ultimate end, the utilitarian rationalists construe all actions as instrumental for maximizing interest, and to this extent the pursuit of interest seemingly appears as an ultimate end. Whereas the Kantian-rational pursuit of interest is achieved by suppressing emotional or passionate satisfaction, and thereby subjects the use of force to intellectual control, theorists of utilitarian rationality instead argue that emotional acts and use of force are more effective means of maximizing interest, to which cognitive calculation is necessarily subordinated. (I subsequently provide a more concrete discussion on rational deterrence theories and Neorealism.)

¹ “Instrumental rationality” is a standard reference but its pioneer is unknown. “Economic reason” and especially “technical rationality” is made famous by Habermas (and Ashley). The “logic of consequence” is used by March & Olson (1998), which is built essentially on “consequentialism”, a term initially coined by G.E.M. Anscombe (1958). The term “utilitarian reason” is turned into a standard reference by Ruggie’s (1998). Many Rational Choice/Game theorists had protested that utilitarian rationality is not solely concerned with “instrument” or “technique” at all, see e.g. Harsanyi 1969.

Second, utilitarian rationality always entails quantification. For utilitarian reason, the quantification of cost, benefit, and risk is a major condition for the maximization of interest: quantification enhances precision and economic management. Although utilitarian reason and Kantian reason share the view that the intellectual faculty is needed in human conduct, utilitarian rationality requires the use of intellect to make very complex calculations to maximize interest (rather than to suppress passions). Two points deserve special emphasis. One is that not all utilitarian rationalists make such a demand on quantification (since a minority of them are satisfied with ordinal ranking). The other is that quantification is not the only way to achieve precision in understanding and action: in chapter four, I explain how historical-rational thinkers, such as Raymond Aron, equate precision with looking more closely at the historically specific.

Third, utilitarian reason is concerned with maximizing interest under a variety of *constraints*. In the Rational-Choice form, the actors' choice is always constrained by uncertainty and the law of marginal utility. In its Game-Theoretical form, constraint can assume a number of forms. Whether the aggregation of payoffs is zero or not (zero-sum game/ and non-zero-sum game), which game is played (focal point, chicken, prisoners' dilemma), whether these games are played with certainty or uncertainty, in a sequential or simultaneous way, in a one-shot or iterated way, all have been specified in order to maximize interest under variously detailed conditions. Here, it is necessary to note that maximizing interest in a *game* always means that the constraint *is* another rational player. Thus, whereas Kantian reason presupposes the universality of human interest (intersubjective understanding enhances moral interdependence and advances the recognition of collective interest), utilitarian rationality, especially in Game-Theoretical form, emphasizes the *individual's* maximization of interest vis-à-vis others. Indeed, all these "constraints" operate to ensure that under a range of specific conditions the actor never misses an option with greater utility.

In addition to the three substantial characteristics, it is noticeable that the theorists of utilitarian rationality always articulate their voices in a presumptive tone: unlike the theorists of Kantian reason, who speak of their language in an exhortative way: reason *should* be used, the intellect *ought* to discipline passion and forge dialogue – the utilitarian theorists always *assume* the actors to be interest maximizers who act under constraints.

My central intention in this chapter is to reconsider how IR thinkers have articulated the language of utilitarian reason on three specific occasions. The first occasion was once referred to by Hannah Arendt as an “‘apocalyptic’ chess game” between the superpowers in the early Cold War, which is “played in accordance with the rule that ‘if either “wins” it is the end of both.”² During the early Cold War period, the relationship between the US and USSR was characterized by bipolar confrontation and nuclear dilemma, a historically unique condition which made peace impossible and war improbable. On the one hand, the superpowers kept an extremely hostile stance towards the other, generating crises and small-scale conflicts. But on the other, they could *not* resort to sheer physical violence to resolve their antagonism. Within such a game, the US needed a handmaiden for deterring the Soviet Union from aggression: it needed to outwin the opponent without an actual trial of strength, *and* halt conflict at the brink of escalating into a total war but without sacrificing its own interest to make concessions.

It was against this background that the utilitarian conception of rationality was initially brought into the discipline in the 1960s. Many prominent economists and mathematicians were subsequently recruited as “the soldiers of reason” to contrive a way out.³ For many of them, the bipolar/nuclear dilemma can be solved by conceptualizing the superpowers as interest-maximizers, who play a “mixed game” that is neither purely conflictual nor cooperative. They used utilitarian rationality to demonstrate how a rational actor can contrive a

² Arendt 1969: 3-4.

³ Abella 2008. A filmed popularization is *The Beautiful Mind* of John Nash.

deterrence of the opponent without incurring a pure conflict that puts physical strength in actual test as a defensive war, and make *conflict resolution* without pure cooperation that may concede interest to the opponent. Focusing on Schelling's *The Strategy of Conflict* (1960), Kahn's *On Thermonuclear War* (1960), Snyder's *Deterrence and Defense* (1961), I show how utilitarian rationality is used as an underlying assumption for envisaging different strategies to deter the opponent under four conditions. First is deterrence as maximizing interest in front of certain payoffs (Schelling's). Second is deterrence as maximizing interest in front of uncertain payoffs (Snyder's). Third and fourth are deterrence under irrational certainty (Kahn's Chicken Game) and irrational uncertainty (Schelling's Brinkmanship): the self can maximize interest to such an extent that it pretends to be passionately or emotionally committed to a payoff (i.e. keeping close to irrationality) to deter the opponent when both the payoff is certain and uncertain. Next I turn to Anatol Rapoport's *Fight, Game and Debate* (1960), Schelling's "tacit bargaining", and Kenneth Boulding's *Conflict and Defense* (1962). I show how the concept is used for envisioning conflict situation as "bargaining" situation, in which conflict can be drew to a close as utility maximizing behavior that make no sacrifices of interest at all. In particular, I concentrate on the work of Thomas Schelling, a writer who has been accredited as having "introduce[d] rational choice analysis to international affairs".⁴

The second occasion is the decline of American power vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and Western allies in the 1970s. With superpower détente in the late 1960s and the rise of economic issues (e.g. the collapse of the Bretton Wood System) in the 1970s, theories of deterrence and conflict increasingly came to appear outdated. At the same time, as Keohane retrospectively recalled, "many voices were claiming that the continuing decline of American hegemony signaled a return to much greater conflict, and the collapse of international

⁴ Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner 1998: 12. Herman Kahn were regarded by his contemporaries as exerting the most influential impacts.

institutions”.⁵ Hence whereas in the 1960s, IR theorists used the concept to explain the peculiar condition of the apocalyptic chess game – which made peace impossible and war improbable, a game neither purely conflictual nor purely cooperative – the political events of the 1970s caused IR scholars to redeploy the concept to show how interest could be maximized under opposite conditions. A new generation of utilitarian-rational theorists showed under what conditions pure conflict, even the use of violence at a systematic level (US vis-à-vis USSR), would occur, and engaged the associated question of whether extensive cooperation (US and her Western allies) at the international level would collapse or be maintained.

In section (ii) I turn to the second wave utilitarian intellectual movement which takes the form of Neorealism and Neoliberalism. Notice that while my label “Neorealism” excludes Waltz – who has been left to the next chapter⁶ – it does contain Gilpin and Bueno de Mesquita’s (hereafter Mesquita) explanation of war in terms of expected utility theory. I start from Gilpin’s *War and Change in World Politics* (1981), one of the defining works of Neorealism, and show how Gilpin uses the concept to explain hegemonic war as the maximization of expected utility within the international system. I then proceed to reexamine Mesquita’s *The War Trap* (1981). I reconsider Mesquita’s use of expected utility theory to dissect the occurrence of war has been previously described by Keohane as “an excellent discussion of the rationality assumption as used in the study of world politics”.⁷

Turning to the Neoliberals next, which represented by Keohane, Stein, and Axelrod’s theories of cooperation, I dissect the three pillars of the Neoliberal movement. One of my initial intentions is to demonstrate how Keohane has

⁵ Keohane 2005: ix.

⁶ The Neorealist scholars I have identified are chiefly those who use utilitarian rationality to explain war. Other scholar, such as Adler (1997: 321), may define in a different way that “Realists (Kaplan, Morgenthau) and Neorealists (Gilpin, Waltz) [...who are] empowered by positivist and exclusively materialist philosophies of science (with the exception of Mearsheimer) have been reluctant to engage in ontological and epistemological polemics. They prefer to explain International Relations as simple behavioral responses to the forces of physics that act on materials objects from the outside”.

⁷ See respectively Keohane 1986: 25 [fn.4], 1983: 201 [fn.11]. Mesquita’s work stimulated huge controversies, and Nicholson (1987: 346) described it as one that had heavily “disturbed the academic dovescotes” in the 1980s.

adapted rationality as an overarching principle to explain the origin and endurance of international institutions. I subsequently show how Keohane uses a more complex way of calculation – the inversion of Coase theorem – to argue for the endurance of international institutions in *After Hegemony* (1984). The second pillar is Stein's and Axelrod's essay "Collaboration and Coordination" (1982) and *The Evolution of Cooperation* (1984). In these works, Stein and Axelrod demonstrate that in a variety of games played either in a simultaneous and one-shot, or a sequentially and iterated way, institutional cooperation can be fostered among the "rational egoists" and varied in types to tackle different games. Notice, as I shall highlight below, how Carr's critique of "harmony of interest", Schelling's "bargaining" and Rapoport's studies of prisoners' dilemma exert huge impacts on both Stein and Axelrod's thinking. The final pillar discloses how the utilitarian reinterpretation of other IR thinker's thoughts has become an important source for creating the illusion of "rationalistic dominance". I argue – or rather reconstitute the very process – that the supremacy of "Rationalism" alleged by Keohane is based on his utilitarian-rational construction and reinterpretation of Morgenthau and Waltz, and that this development has in turn engendered a series of conceptual, historical, and theoretical misunderstandings. The proposition that Morgenthau is a utilitarian rationalist has been erroneously taken for granted; similarly the assertion that Waltz is a utilitarian rationalist has also been widely accepted.

The third point of engagement is the unexpected end of the Cold War, in the aftermath of which many utilitarian rationalists expressed their hope to revamp utilitarian reason by integrating domestic culture and regime type into a more encompassing utilitarian analysis. On the one hand, IR theorists are dissatisfied with the Neoliberals and Neorealists, arguing that the utilitarian conception of rationality is undermined not because it has gone too far, but because it has not gone far enough in unpacking the enclosed state box and showing how interests in conflict and cooperation are conditioned by endogenous factors) On the other hand, in face of the challenges posed by Constructivists that utilitarian

explanations have been confined to “material” and “unitary” interest, they endeavor to revamp utilitarian rationality by bringing culture and domestic institution into analytical view. The upshot is what I call “endogenous rationalists”. Hence in section (iii) I show how these “endogenous rationalists”, such as Moravcsik, Milner, Goldstein and Keohane, Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein, juxtapose domestic institutions and cultures within their utilitarian framework. They endeavor to show that by unveiling the process of how the states’ preferences are generated in culture and aggregated in configuration, the states’ actions of war and peace can be aptly explained.

Before proceeding two interrelated cautions are required. First, whereas the thinkers of Kantian reason always speak of a language of humanity, the voices articulated by the theorists of utilitarian rationality sound dehumanized, neutral and objective. Second, utilitarian reason is saturated with the pursuit of precision, and by complex calculations that many figures, formulas and equations will be lurking behind.

*(i) “To Deter or Not to Deter”: Theorizations of Deterrence
and Conflict Resolution in the 1950s and 60s*

During the late 1940s and early 1960s, the two superpowers were trapped into a deadly predicament. On the one hand, the Americans and Soviets, together with their respective allies, displayed extreme hostility towards each other. The Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons (1949) and the successful launch of Sputnik (1957) were seen as fatal threats to the Americans. The creation of NATO (1949) and the remilitarization of Germany (1956) were perceived by the Soviets as inherently aggressive acts. The outbreak of the Korean War in 1951, the Berlin Crisis in 1954 and 1958, and the Cuba Missile Crisis (1962), exposed the level of tension that divided the two blocks. On the other hand, it was impossible for both powers to resolve their antagonistic confrontation by sheer violence. Although equipped with nuclear weapons that could “bury” the other

side at any time, neither party could gain a victory in the traditional sense where the victor survived the war. What differentiates the diplomatic and military practices from prior periods resides precisely in the predicament that both actors maintain an extremely hostile stance but *cannot* resort to sheer physical violence. It was a predicament in which, as a leading French thinker Raymond Aron observed, “*paix impossible, guerre improbable*”.⁸

It is living in this dilemma that grave anxiety is engendered over the period. In such “an era of anxiety” (as Holsti termed it),⁹ an apprehensive epoch characterized by intensive crisis and pessimistic prospect of peace, strong pressures were exerted on successive American governments to contrive a dual way out. On the one side, assuming the burden and imminent risk of nuclear war, the Americans needed a strategic “handmaiden” for containing the Soviets. On the other side, the Americans wanted to ensure that they could escape from the nuclear dilemma, which required a knowledge of how to avert crisis on the brink of a nuclear shooting match. “Many of the social scientists who are moving into the study of conflict want to get something accomplished”, Charles McClelland recounted, since they “are beginning to see that firm knowledge of the dynamic of conflict is the crucial factor in future social survival...but many think that there is not much time”.¹⁰ Cold War bipolarity and the nuclear predicament, indeed, posed the thorny question of “how to survive in the margin between mutual deterrence on the one side and mutual destruction on the other”.¹¹

Indeed, with the immediate conclusion of the Second World War, there had already been such individual efforts, including Bernard Brodie's *The Absolute Weapon* (1946) and Hans Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations* (1948) which touched on the problem. But with the entrance of the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations (1952-1963), the task of addressing the dilemma was soon

⁸ Cited from Mahoney 1992: 150.

⁹ Holsti 1998.

¹⁰ McClelland 1962: 94.

¹¹ McClelland 1962: 88.

upgraded from spontaneous thinking into organized and institutionalized research. The funding of research centers on national security, military strategy and conflict resolution drastically increased; new journals were founded; think tanks such as RAND were created, and prominent economists, mathematicians and physicians were recruited.¹²

Within this mobilization of intellectual capital, the clash between two groups of scholars became increasingly evident. On the one side, scholars such as Hans Morgenthau and John Herz, although acknowledging the novelty of the dilemma, considered that the political vocabulary which had prevailed prior to the Cold War was still employable enough to guide the design of foreign policy.¹³ Force rationally deployed, in Morgenthau's view, is to act in accordance with Clausewitz's ideal, scrupulously thinking about whether nuclear weapons can serve as means for promoting an intelligible end. The Cold War, for him, demanded only a "New Balance of Power".¹⁴

Yet, for the other group, the Cold War between the superpowers represented such a decisive break with the past that both the old vocabulary and the slippery meanings of the terms were far from sufficient. "One of the most important things that could be done to facilitate discussion of defense problems", Khan argued in his *On Thermonuclear War* (1960), "would be to create a vocabulary that is both small enough and simple enough to be learned, precise enough to communicative, and large enough so that all of the important ideas...can be comfortably and easily described".¹⁵ Schelling observed, in the *Strategy of Conflict* (1960, hereafter *Strategy*), that in the context of superpower struggle, which was "inherently frantic, noisy, and disruptive, defined by an environment

¹² These centers include for instance the Conflict Resolution in Michigan University, which hosted the publications by Rapoport, Boulding, and *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. The Princeton Center of International Studies in Princeton University was renowned for its publication on the studies of strategy/security. RAND, whose relation with the US Air Force is compared by Boulding (1962: 332) as "a study of the Reformation by Jesuits based on unpublished and secret documents in the Vatican", is described by Abella (2008: 54) as "difficult to think of any of the major figures in game theory who did not work for RAND at some point during that period [mid 1950s]".

¹³ Worse still, the dominance of such terms as "realism", "idealism", "moralism", "legalism", "internationalism" – all had been used by Morgenthau and Herz – disturbed the newly came utilitarian theorists.

¹⁴ Morgenthau 1948a. For Herz (1950: 180), the superpower struggle remains a "security dilemma", although it "is perhaps more clear-cut than it ever was before".

¹⁵ Kahn 1960: 5.

of acute uncertainty, and conducted by human beings who have never experienced such a crisis before and on an extraordinarily demanding time schedule”, “the retarded science of international strategy” needed to be enriched by new thought.¹⁶ The Americans, G.H. Snyder criticized in his *Deterrence and Defense* (1961), “have no scarcity of prescriptive arguments for or against some policy alternative”; however “a systematic method, or theory” that could be used to “compare and weigh the arguments for particular policies”, was in radical absence.¹⁷ World politics, as A.L. Burns observed in an enormously influential article entitled “From Balance to Deterrence” (1957), was in a transition in an era when the balance of power, even of a new kind, was insufficient to meet the scale and significance of the change.¹⁸ And no one contributed more than a co-founder of Game Theory to explain why such a new vocabulary – a scientific, mathematical, demonstrable, operational, vocabulary – *must* be employed:

“The problem raised are harder than the most difficult problems ever solved in science. They are much less understood, not clearly described, not sharply defined. No specific science exists that is designed to cope with them, and the great, accumulated experience of the military has for the most part become obsolete...In the absence of firm guidance from established science and valid experience it is little wonder that authority while behind them there is exactly nothing. ‘Sound military decision’ and ‘calculated risk’ are some of these phrases [...] We do need guidance. It can come only from combining experience with a highly developed, proven system of thought. Loose thinking is seldom permissible.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Schelling 1960: Ch.1, Schelling 1965: 220.

¹⁷ Snyder 1961: v.

¹⁸ A.L. Burns 1957.

¹⁹ Morgenstern 1959: 5, see also 76.

Loose thinking is seldom permissible indeed! But how can they break a path in contriving a vocabulary? These mathematicians, economists, physicians, rather than “manqués” who are “unable to make careers for themselves in their own fields”, as Bull’s acid pen presented,²⁰ have instead carried with themselves the newly-developed, powerful, intellectual weapon with which they have been familiar by profession. Schelling, for example, proclaimed that “the premise of ‘rational behavior’” was as “potent” as “productive” for developing the retarded science of military strategy.²¹ For Rapoport, following the lead of utilitarian rationality, “one gets an entirely new slant on conflict and on the requirement of any discipline which proposes to deal with conflict”.²² Furthermore, the game-theoretical construction of two agents who are using strategies to maximize his own utility under the constraint of the other’s choice epitomizes so perfectly the reality of the early period of the Cold War.²³ It is on the basis of their steadfast belief in the concept of utilitarian rationality that they make their strident promises.

Here it is noticeable that there are two subtle differences between the new utilitarian rationality and the old Kantian conception. First, although utilitarian rationality partly shares the Kantian idea of intelligibility, it also has a distinct focus that clearly distinguishes it from the former. Schelling spelt this point out in more detail:

“If we confine our study to the theory of strategy, we seriously restrict ourselves by the assumption of rational behavior – *not just of intelligent behavior*, but of behavior motivated by a conscious calculation of advantages, a calculation that in turn is based on an explicit and internal consistent value system.”²⁴

²⁰ Hedley Bull 1966: 25.

²¹ Schelling 1960: 4, see also 14-6.

²² Rapoport 1960: xiii.

²³ See e.g. von Neumann & Morgenstern 1944.

²⁴ Schelling 1960: 4, emphasis added.

The “conscious calculation of advantages” makes the new rationality transparent to the objective observer. Or, as Rapoport clarified, the utilitarian agent was particularly aware of “the possible consequences of each of the courses of action” and of “a certain preference order” that could most likely bring about the desired consequence, taking into account other “courses of action which other individuals will choose”.²⁵ For Kahn, preference ordering in a scale had to be presented.²⁶ For the idea of utilitarian rationality, as I shall soon show, calculation is always conducted in a quantitative manner, a feature which sharply contrasts with the blunt way of calculation proffered by the thinkers of Kantian reason.

Second (and on this point I shall say more below), utilitarian rationality, unlike its Kantian counterpart, admits, or rather advocates, the “*rationality of irrationality*”.²⁷ For Schelling as well as for Kahn, passionate/emotional commitment should not be disciplined by the intellect. Rather, to maximize interest, “it would be rational for a rational player to destroy his own rationality”, or “it may be perfectly rational to wish oneself not altogether rational”.²⁸ In order to “maximize one’s value position”, as Snyder elaborated, it would be legitimate to pursue “‘emotional’ values [such] as honor, prestige, and revenge”.²⁹

It was due to this belief in the power of utilitarian reason that the concept, together with the theories of deterrence and conflict solution which built on it, suddenly arose around the turn of the 1960s. Whereas the old Kantian conception of reason is under critical reconstruction, the new utilitarian conception has been privileged and elevated over its contemporaries. This shift in the meaning of reason has been captured by Miles Kahler:

²⁵ Rapoport 1960: 108.

²⁶ Kahn 1960: 120ff.

²⁷ The term came from Kahn 1960: 291, emphasis in original. Most utilitarian theorists referred to Khrushchev’s unconventionally diplomatic performance as example. See e.g. Kahn 1960: 293, Schelling 1960: 17-8, 1965: 39-43. Cf. George and Smoke 1974: 490

²⁸ Schelling 1960: 143, 18

²⁹ Snyder 1961: 25.

“Realist skepticism toward the power of reason, grounded in European intellectual life, was soon purged in its new American home [...] Running counter to this forceful but temporary European insertion in American international relations were more powerful countervailing tendencies that reinforced rationalist approaches to international relations: economic analysis exploited the assumption of utility maximization to construct a research program that was the envy of the other social sciences; strategic interaction began to yield to the power of game theory and its international relations offshoot, deterrence theory”.³⁰

Kahler is right to highlight the succession between the two languages. Yet he errs in claiming that rationalist approaches are being “reinforced”. On the very contrary: when O. Morgenstern issued *The Question of National Defense* (1959), Schelling collated his pre-circulated essays into *The Strategy of Conflict* (1960), Kahn delivered his lectures *On Thermonuclear War* (1960), G.H. Snyder published *Deterrence and Defense* (1961), A. Rapoport released his defining *Fight, Game, and Debate* (1960), K.E. Boulding offered his *Conflict and Defense* (1962), and various scholars, including J. Harsanyi, devoted a special issue to the game-theoretical study of international relations (in *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* (1962),³¹ they were *unprecedentedly* installing “rationalist approaches” into the discipline and *initiating* the first utilitarian, intellectual, movement.

Deterrence

Deterrence was to provide the initial context in which the utilitarian concept of rationality was deployed. For the deterrence theorists, the concept of rationality

³⁰ Kahler 1998: 281.

³¹ There are other works that deserve mention

was useful to the extent that it demonstrated how violence can be utilized as a potential rather than actual resource for triumphing over the adversary. The crux is to outwit the opponent without an actual trial of strength. Hence most theorists draw a clear distinction between deterrence and defense.³² Whereas defense entails the actual, *ex post*, warfare, deterrence points to the potential, *ex ante*, threat of warfare. Deterrence, as Rapoport maintained, was to “outwin” the opponent without the actual use of force.³³ “Strategy [of deterrence]”, Schelling highlighted, “is not concerned with the efficient *application* of force but with the *exploitation of potential force*”. This in turn explains why “violence is most purposive and most successful when it is threatened and not used”.³⁴

On the basis of these assumptions, four ways of utilizing the potential force have been proposed: deterrence under rational certainty, deterrence under rationally irrational certainty, deterrence under rationally irrational uncertainty and finally deterrence under rational uncertainty.

The first influential contrivance originates within Schelling's *Strategy*. Schelling stresses, with particularly strong emphasis, that rationality is *not* used for demonstrating an unsophisticated form of deterrence as mere cost-benefit analysis. (Deterrence then takes a simplistic threat that “I can inflict more hurt (cost) upon you than you upon me”.) Rather, rationality can be deployed to show how an actor can make complex calculations to artfully triumph over the opponent by simultaneously posing a “threat”, preventing the opponent from doing what is not expected, and by the origination and extension of a “promise”; namely seducing the opponent to do what is expected by the self.

Consider Schelling's illustration of deterrence under *rational and certain* condition.³⁵ Suppose that both actors are interest maximizers who anticipate, and who stand in front of given, certain, payoffs. Suppose the game is played

³² Sometimes disputes arise over where the line should be drawn. Schelling (1966: 78-86), for instance, insists the distinction but think the two maybe emerged once war breaks out. Snyder (1961: 11-2) contends that even in war the two remains separable: “when deterrence fails and war begins, the attacked party is no longer ‘detering’ but ‘defending’.”

³³ Rapoport 1960: 9-11.

³⁴ Schelling 1960: 5, 1966: 10, emphasis in original.

³⁵ Schelling 1960: Chs. 3-5.

in a sequential and one-shot way by Row and Column.³⁶ Row is a defender and Column is an aggressor who is expected to initiate attack.

	I	II
i	1, 2	2, 1
ii	0, 0	0, 0

Fig. 2.1 Threat

	I	II
i	0, 0	2, -1
ii	0, 0	1, 1

Fig. 2.2 Promise

	I	II
i	2, 5	4, 4
ii	1, 1	5, 0

Fig. 2.3 Deterrence

In the first game of threat (Fig. 2.1), Column will win if moved first [2, 1]. Row, knowing that Column is rational, can issue a threat before Column making his move: if Column chooses I Row will take ii, which leads finally to the payoff [0, 0] for both of them. Column, if rational and convinced,³⁷ will decide on II rather than I. By using threat, Row eschews the occurrence of disadvantage. In the second game of promise (Fig. 2.2), Column will strive for [1,1] but necessarily runs the risk of the outcome [2, -1]. Now if Row promises, once again before Column making his own choice, that Row will decide on ii [1, 1] provided Column will have chosen II, then Column will, if rational and persuaded, decide on Row's promise. Row secures the most beneficial outcome.

Deterrence, for Schelling, is a sophisticated and strategic maneuver (see Fig. 2.3). It is completed, not by a crude warning of the unbearable cost of aggression that may far exceed the benefit, but by a crafty move to maximize one interest by coupling "a threat and a promise".³⁸ Suppose that Column is still permitted to make the first move. Column is prone to choose I, and Row has to threaten ii [1, 1] against I [2, 5]. As a rational agent, Column will become likely to take II, but there is II-ii [5, 0] that makes him refrain from acting in accordance with a firmly convinced resolution. In order to tempt Column to choose II-i, Row must accompany his threat with a promise that he will not choose ii in the event of II taken by Column.

³⁶ Notice here that it is on this occasion that Schelling injected the concept of "moves" into game theory.

³⁷ How to convince the opponent is an extremely controversial topic known as the one of "credibility".

³⁸ Schelling 1960: 133, 1965: 74.

Like Schelling, Herman Kahn also constructs his *On Thermonuclear War* (1960) on the assumption of rationality. But unlike the former, Kahn considers deterrence less as a sort of strategic maneuver than as a game in itself. Envisage that two superpowers are playing a game, called “Chicken”, under the condition of *rationality irrational certainty*. The game “Chicken”, whose rules have been well-known, is used by Bertrand Russell in his *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare* (1959) to show how the leaders of the superpowers should de-emotionalize their struggle and use dialogue to achieve nuclear disarmament. Russell condemned the dangerous practice of the superpowers in following the practice of the “youthful plutocrats” in America, risking “not only their own lives but also those of many hundreds of millions of human beings”.³⁹ Kahn, however, turns this argument on its head to show how statesmen can be passionately committed to the maximization of their states’ interests. Consider Fig. 2.4, where Row and Column are still playing a sequential and one shot game.⁴⁰

	I (Offensive)	II (Defensive)
i (Offensive)	-100, -100	5, 1
ii (Defensive)	1, 5	-100, -100

Fig. 2.4 Chicken

Suppose that both I and i signifies an offensive gesture, and II and ii a defensive one. Suppose further that if both choose to be offensive, a war will occur and both suffer [-100, -100]. If both tend to be defensive, they will both forfeit the utility [-100, -100] which could have been realized had they pretended to be offensive. Third, if Row takes the offensive initiative and Column retreats, or conversely Column acts as if aggressive and Row withdraws, then the side who initiates the aggressive move in the first place obtains the most utility.

³⁹ Kahn 1960: 291-2, cf. Russell 1959: 30.

⁴⁰ Kahn’s original illustration is too complex to be reproduced here. Modern utilitarian rationalists (e.g. Elster 2007) will tend to conceive of Chicken as a simultaneous game.

To break through this predicament, Row has to make a resolved commitment to losing 100 in order to win 5. For Kahn, an agent should be so passionately committed to the payoff that he is on the brink of becoming totally irrational. To deter the opponent, the agent must even be willing to run the risk of losing 100 to obtain 5.

Schelling's design of playing a game under *rationally irrational uncertain* conditions pushes Kahn's argument one substantial step further.⁴¹ In Schelling's view, to deter the aggressor one must envisage not only that it may be possible to couple a threat with a promise, nor merely to feign to be rationally irrational, but instead to be predisposed to "chance, accident, third-party influence, imperfection in the machinery of decision, or just processes that we do not entirely understand" and which "neither we nor the party we threaten can entirely control".⁴²

	Attack	Non-Attack
Retaliation (p)	-100, -x	0, 0
Non-Retaliation (1-p)	-10, 200	0, 0

Fig. 2.5

The figure above shows how Schelling's "brinkmanship" and the "manipulation of risk" function.⁴³ Suppose that Row and Column are involved in a game in which Column could attack Row and, the payoff is $(-x)$ if Row retaliates at the probability of p , and 200 if Row fails to counterattack at the probability of $(1 - p)$. Suppose further that Column has no idea of how large (or small) p and x is. In this case, Column will be incapable of making any decisions at all, precisely because, if he is rational, there is no way to calculate the consequences of each course of action. Column is deterred by a calculation whose outcome is so indeterminate that it effectively invokes paralysis of calculation.

⁴¹ Schelling 1960: Ch.8.

⁴² Schelling 1960: 188.

⁴³ "Brinkmanship is thus the deliberate creation of a recognizable risk of war, a risk that one does not completely control...It means harassing and intimidating an adversary by exposing him to a shared risk, or deterring him by showing that if he makes a contrary move he may disturb us so that we slip over the brink whether we want or not, carrying him with us", Schelling 1960: 200.

The last kind of deterrence, contrived by G.H. Snyder in his *Deterrence and Defense* (1961), which was conceived as acritical response to Schelling, takes back to the basic form of cost-benefit calculation. Suppose that both the agent and the opponent are interest maximizers, but they are uncertain about the probability that their counterpart will attack or retaliate. In order to deter the rational opponent, the decision maker has to think about how to demonstrate his own credibility (as to how he will repel an attack). The crux of the issue is illustrated in the subsequent figure.

Row (Defender's) Retaliation Probability	Column (Aggressor's) Calculus	
	Attack	Not Attack
Retaliation: p	-90	0
Not Retaliation: 1-p	10	0

Fig. 2.6

As Fig. 2.6 illustrates, Row and Column are choosing under the uncertainty where, when under attack, Row's possibility of retaliation is p , and the non-retaliation possibility $(1 - p)$. Given this calculus, Column will expect that the utility in attacking Row is $U = p(-90) + (1 - p)10$. If the expected utility of aggression ($U > 0$) exceeds zero, then the attack will be conducted; if not, then no attack happens. Given this calculus, the deterrence of a potential aggression works in a way both similar to and different from Schelling's. The similarity lies in the uncertainty of retaliation (p). Yet, whereas Schelling wants to retain and exploit uncertainty to paralyze the opponent's calculative action, Snyder instead proposes that Row should demonstrate to Column that there is a probability of retaliation which will *at least* make the expected utility of aggressions less than zero (*contra* Schelling), and at best highly (or uncertainly) enough to make aggression very costly. It is by demonstrating to Column that Row's probability of retaliation is over 0.1 ($x(-90) + (1 - x)10 < 0$, then $x > 0.1$) that Column can be deterred.

Under those four conditions – rational certainty (Schelling), rationally irrational certainty (Kahn), rationally irrational uncertainty (Schelling) and finally

rational uncertainty (Snyder) – the rational agent Row is expected to have deterred Column. But what if Row fails? Can conflict and crisis, before escalating into a total war, still be bounded and at the same time the resolution of conflict makes no gesture of concession?

Conflict Resolution

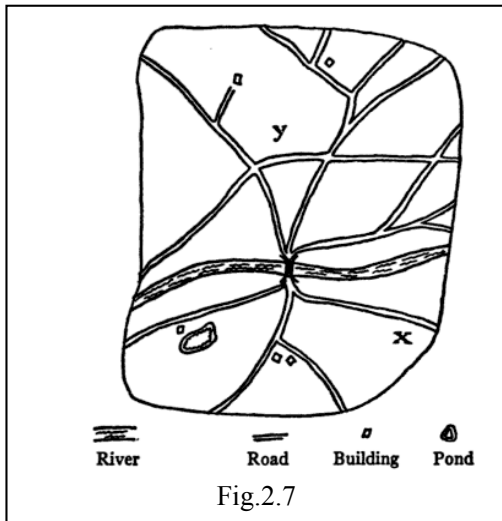
For the first wave utilitarian rationalists, the deterrence of an opponent is unconditionally prioritized over defense. But once war has occurred, it will have to be “bounded”, otherwise there is a clear risk that both will be dragged into a nuclear war. It is noticeable how the theorists of utilitarian rationality use the concept to contrive conflict resolution. Rapoport, in his influential *Fights, Games and Debates* (1960), offered two particularly insightful observations.⁴⁴ First, whereas debate expect persuasion, conviction and mutual understanding to solve conflict – typically Kantian-rational methods – the utilitarian-rational (game) theorists envisage instead that conflict can be solved without any verbal exchanges or through the “voices of reason”. The intense confrontation between the superpowers forbids dialogue, making actions speak louder than words. Second, more crucially, conflict can be solved in a way that allows each actor to maximize their individual interest in a manner that is inclusive of their opponents’ interest. In other words, no “harmony of interest” is required to solve conflict.

Consider two instructive examples. The first is Schelling’s theory of “tacit bargaining”. Suppose, as Schelling does, that conflict resolution, far from being a process of reaching consensus through mutual understanding and moral interdependence, is one that entails bargaining. In this sense, it is appropriate to reflect that “most conflict situations are essentially *bargaining* situations”. Even war, Schelling continued, “is always a bargaining process”, requiring “accommodation”, “cooperation”, or even “collaboration” between

⁴⁴ Rapoport 1960.

adversaries.⁴⁵ Suppose further that within most conflict situations (conceived as instances of bargaining), the agents are too antagonistic to speak to each other. Given this situation of tacit bargaining, how can conflict be resolved?

Schelling's answer is to show that the agents can sometimes discover the focal point where their expectations (of a solution of conflict) may converge.⁴⁶ His two experiments are well-known: first, Row and Column, possess divergent



and rival interests but are required to make choices in confrontation;⁴⁷ they are given 100 (say utilities as dollar) to divide. They will receive what they claimed if the total amount of claim does not exceed 100, and nothing if the aggregation of their two claims is over 100. Let them make the claim. Second, suppose that Row and Column are commanding two armies (respectively X and Y). Both actors are

required to occupy as much space as he can in the map (fig. 2.7), and both are ordered to fortify his front as a line that could facilitate defense. If the occupying areas overlap, or intersect, or if there are empty space which has not be occupied (which leads to the instability of situation), then violent combat will occur. Let them draw the line that demarcates the two areas.

How will Row and Column behave? Schelling's answer is that even without communication between the two, they will both converge their expectations on some "focal point" (of "prominence, uniqueness, simplicity" or precedency) that could facilitate a situation in which the agent reaches a settlement.⁴⁸ In the first example, both Row and Column converge their expectations on 50 as the focal

⁴⁵ Schelling 1960: 5, 1961: 50, 1965: 142, emphasis in original, also 1960: Chs. 2-3, 1965: esp. 136 [fn.7], 216-20.

⁴⁶ The Chinese's unanticipated intervention in the Korean War impressed Schelling (1965: 134) to such an extent that "The Yalu [River] was like the Rubicon. To cross it would have signaled some something. It was a natural place to stop; crossing it would have been a new start". See further Schelling 1965: Chs.2, 4, *passim*.

⁴⁷ Schelling 1960: 55ff.

⁴⁸ Schelling 1960: 70-1.

point. In the second, Row and Column draw the line along the river, and thereby divide the whole space. Although Schelling has not explicitly specified this point, the function of rationality, by which to converge the two agents' expectations on a focal point, is crucial. In the first case, unless both are rational maximizers, 50 cannot be a focal point (why not 30/70?). In the latter case, Schelling deliberately designs the condition on the understanding that empty space will leave the door open to a potential conflict.

In an account which recalls Schelling's theory of focal point on the presupposed basis of rationality (which is expounded in more depth in *Conflict and Defense* (1962)) Boulding similarly demonstrates how conflict can be resolved through interest-maximized behavior.⁴⁹ Suppose first that there are two organizations named Row and Column, whose action is constrained by the law, with the further serving as the weaker" or "loss-of-power gradient".⁵⁰ With the extension of distance, the actors' marginal benefits of projection of power will decrease as costs increase (see Fig. 2.8).

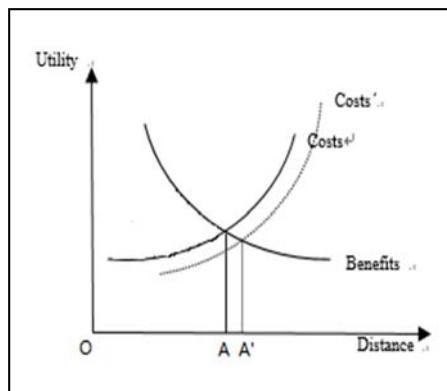


Fig. 2.8

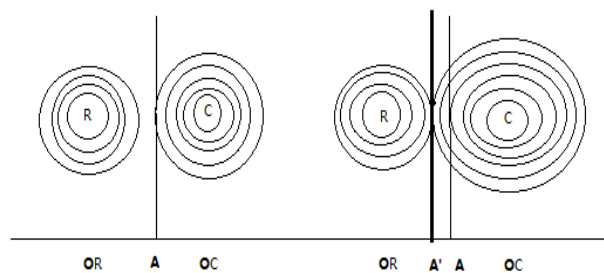


Fig. 2.9

Suppose further that Row and Column are two interest maximizers. Whereas Row's and Column's original spheres of influences center upon O_C and O_R , Column can only reach point A (the left of Fig. 2.9). Column, by acquiring a technical improvement, could expand from A to A' (the right of Fig. 2.9); as a

⁴⁹ Boulding 1962: Chs.4, 12, 13.

⁵⁰ Boulding 1962: 79.

consequence, Column's curve of cost is moves towards the right (see Fig. 2.8, with specific reference to the curve of 'costs').

Like Schelling, Boulding also urges to find the point where Row's interest can be maximized without, however, inducing an overlapping of arena, a proposition that is based on the clear understanding that this development may cause instability and war. For Boulding, it is crucial for Row to perform two acts. First, it is important to understand that as long as Column's curve of costs moves towards the right and there are net benefits to gain, Column will continue to expand – the assumption of maximization of interest clearly manifests itself in this understanding. Second, if Row, in preparing his defense at A', even if this triggers conflict with Column, can both restrain Column's expansion and eschew a general escalation into war.

For both Schelling and Boulding, this approach (in which both actors are conceived as interest maximizers) can shed enormous light on the problem of conflict resolution. Although Boulding draws more on the law of marginal utility whereas Schelling relies more heavily on two-person bargaining, both of them sketch an extremely similar picture. In doing so, they illustrate that both actors can expand to a point – a river or a new equilibrium point – and that neither overlapping nor empty space can exist. In doing so, both writers perfectly illustrate how the Americans and Soviets can at the same time maximize their interest (with conflictual interest) while preventing this same conflict of interests leading to a total war.

The Impacts of the First Utilitarian Movement

The nuclear dilemma and the general political condition of bipolarity (both of which defined the early stages of the Cold War) gave a strong impetus to the first wave of utilitarian theorization. Political influences aside,⁵¹ contributions

⁵¹ Kahn's work is seen as laying the foundations for American Nuclear Strategy. Schelling is construed as theorizing Dulles' Brinkmanship. Kennedy's play of the Chicken Game in Cuba, McNamara's bombing on the Vietcong ("Compellence") has been considered by many as the influences of them.

from Schelling, Kahn, Snyder, Boulding, and Rapoport placed the concept of utilitarian rationality at the center of controversy. In their view, utilitarian rationality, by demonstrating in an ordinal way how calculations of costs/benefits and risks could deter the opponent and halt the conflict, represented an unparalleled accomplishment which both enhanced precision and orientated strategy.

It is this claimed advantage of rationality that has sparked many subsequent debates and discussions. Critics such as George and Rapoport (who outlined his apprehensions in *Strategy and Conscience* (1964) subsequently pointed out that the concept essentially presupposes what the decision-maker *and* the opponent are *assumed* to behave.⁵² Deterrence and conflict resolution can work only if the players undertake actions in accordance with what the *utilitarian* assumes their calculations of utility and risk to be. To this extent, the stipulation of rationality is more like an ideal than a description.⁵³ As I subsequently illustrate, utilitarian theorists generally evidenced this failing: namely the inability to recognize the presumptive tone and character of their assertions.

A further criticism derived from the insight that the utilitarian conception of reason is too individualistic. Decision making is a complex, collective, process that cannot be merely explained as a single interest-maximizing choice. Allison's *The Essence of Decision* (1971) soon stimulated wide echoes.⁵⁴

Third, the utilitarian conception of reason was heavily criticized, especially by the "Traditionalists", for its instrumentality and quantification. Morgenthau subsequently questioned the instrumentality of nuclear weapons from a Kantian-rational (Clausewitzian) perspective (as I have expounded in a previous chapter). Hedley Bull attacked the deterrence theorists' attempt at "eliminating antiquated methods", a position which appeared to rest upon the fallacy that a rational theory "will enable us to rationalize our choices and

⁵² See Green 1964: Ch5, George & Smoke 1974, esp. Jervis 1979.

⁵³ The earliest critique I can find is Verba 1961. See also George & Smoke 1974.

⁵⁴ Allison 1971.

increase our control to the same extent as the latter [economics] has done”.⁵⁵ Raymond Aron, as I shall demonstrate in the fourth chapter, criticized the quantification of interest, and argued against the abstractness of calculation, arguing instead in favor of a closer engagement with specific (or structural), spatial-temporal conditions, an emphasis which in turn preceded a more precise mode of political conduct.

The final criticism addressed itself to the intellectual foundations which these scholars established. From the mid/late 1960s onwards, the deterrence theorists, these self-professed soldiers of reason, began retreat.⁵⁶ Yet from a more long-term perspective, these first wave utilitarian theorizations were to provide a pattern (or style) of analysis for later generation scholars, a contribution which was most obviously evidenced in the emergence of their Neo-Neo successors in the 1980s. Gilpin was to later draw upon Boulding’s proposition. Rapoport’s interest in the two-person Prisoners’ Dilemma,⁵⁷ which evidenced the clear imprint of the Cold War superpower struggle, was later to re-emerge within Axelrod’s work (most notably in the latter’s consideration of the optimal conditions for the consolidation of cooperation). Schelling’s theory of focal points in tacit bargaining is, in turn, widely recognized to have impacted on the work of say Arthur Stein.

Having experienced its initial blooming in the early 1960s, the first utilitarian flower finally withered. The drastic change of the political context in the late 1960s and the 1970s in turn raised the question of whether theories of deterrence and conflict resolution were now outdated. The focus of attention increasingly turned towards interdependence (with Keohane and Nye’s 1972 publication, *Power and Interdependence*), the operations of the world capitalist

⁵⁵ Bull 1968: 595, also 601ff. I spend more space on Morgenthau and Aron because their critiques are now less familiar and systematically studied than Bull’s.

⁵⁶ Schelling’s efforts in *Arms and Influences* (1965), and Kahn’s *On Escalation* (1965), Boulding (1963) abstained from saying systematically on conflict resolution after his *tour de force* except several short essays on calling for promoting “peace research” in universities after 1963. Morgenstern ceased to research on strategy since 1966. And it was not until 1971 that Snyder (1971) released his another major work on game theory and endeavored to reoriented them to power analysis Harsanyi 1969, Snyder 1971, Snyder & Diesing 1978.

⁵⁷ Rapoport & Chammah 1965.

system (see Wallerstein's *The Modern World System*, which was published in 1974), and the political significance of the international system (see Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, which was published in 1979). By direct implication, the value and importance of utilitarian rationality appeared to be increasingly questionable.⁵⁸ Yet it is precisely the political context, which was so influential in engendering these challenges to Rational Deterrence Theories, that was to subsequently pave the way for the Neo-Neo movement of the 1980s.

(ii) The Neorealist and Neoliberal Movement of the 1980s

Hegemony and Legitimacy of Pax Americana

In retrospect, the 1960s and 1970s can be said to have contributed two dramatic changes to international politics. The first was detente between the superpowers. Within the Soviet bloc, Brezhnev succeeded Khrushchev in 1964. The Prague Uprising in 1968, to which Brezhnev responded with the doctrine of "international obligation" of socialist countries, and the fermenting impacts of the Sino-Soviet split (an ongoing consideration since 1962), directed the Soviets' attention increasingly to the consolidation of the socialist camp. On the American side, the Vietnam War had been escalated by Lyndon Johnson after he came to power in 1963. This war, denounced by Morgenthau as so "emotionally committed" that it becomes "a counter-theory of international politics, a kind of pathology of international politics", would drag the Americans into a political and military quagmire for a decade.⁵⁹ Around the same time, the French demand for an independent nuclear policy and the expulsion of NATO from its territory, sent shockwaves through the Western alliance. In

⁵⁸ Keohane & Nye 1972, Wallerstein 1974, Waltz 1979.

⁵⁹ Morgenthau 1972: 7.

consequence, the attention of both superpowers increasingly turned to the consolidation of their respective blocs and spheres of influence.

Second, it is particularly important to recognize that the US' own position within the international system substantially changed during this period. With the escalation of Vietnam War and the resurgence of the European states and Japan, both of which undermined US power in both an absolute and relative sense, the question of whether the US could sustain its leadership and management became increasingly pressing. In 1971, the Breton Wood System collapsed, engendering the first "Nixon Shock" and the generalized fear of a return to the Great Depression. "In the world agencies for maintaining freer trade and a liberal flow of capital and aid", Kindleberger warned two year later, the leadership of the United States is disconcertingly "slipping".⁶⁰ The Oil crisis of 1973 (which was triggered by American support for Israel during the Yom Kippur war) was also to occur in the same year as Kindleberger's study of the Great Depression. This event, as Joseph Nye subsequently recalled, demonstrated "that power can also grow out of a barrel of oil".⁶¹ This point was underlined by the extent to which the embargo paralyzed American power and posed an unprecedentedly novel problem to the use of force.⁶² Those monetary and energy "shocks" were not, however, the end of the story. During the 1970s, the rise of MNCs (that apparently substituted the function of the state in governing international trade), the deterioration of environments, the rapid growth of population, and finally the proliferation of nuclear weapons (which changed the bipolar nuclear monopoly to a multipolar nuclear competition) all contributed to a growing global unease: a development which was further compounded by the decline of American influence. Each event appeared almost as confirmation of the fact that things seemed to be falling apart.⁶³

⁶⁰ Kindleberger 1973: 304.

⁶¹ Nye 2003: 195.

⁶² Keohane 1984: 224, 204.

⁶³ Susan Strange (1982: 339-40) was the first scholar I know who realized that these shocks were "exaggerated".

The impacts of these shocks were tremendous. First, the dramatic transformation of international politics, which changed the US' superior position into a much inferior one, was matched by a parallel anxiety which hung over the early utilitarian rationalists. "By the 1980s this *Pax Americana* was in a state of disarray", a fact which was reproduced in the bleak diagnosis of leading American scholars:

"Here, perhaps, is the greatest cause for anxiety in the years immediately ahead. What would be the reaction of the United States if the balance of power is seen to be shifting irrevocably to the Soviet advantage? What would be the Soviet response to a perceived threat of encirclement by a resurgent United States, an industrialized China, a dynamic Japan, a hostile Islam, an unstable eastern [sic] Europe, and a modernized NATO? How might one or another of these powers respond to the continuing redistribution of world power?"⁶⁴

"Many voices were claiming that", as Keohane was to subsequently recall of the 1970s, "the continuing decline of American hegemony signaled a return to much greater conflict, and the collapse of international institutions".⁶⁵ Krasner, when reflecting upon the 70s, posed the question "why did things not fall apart during the 1970s?"⁶⁶

Second, and more crucially, previously dominant ways of studying international relations (e.g. merely in terms of strategy and conflict resolution) became increasingly unsustainable. The anxiety generated by the elusive prospect of a declining American power begged once again the question of management. In the face of these transformations, one scholar observed that "the study of internationals is fast replacing economics as the dismal science".⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Gilpin 1981: 231, 239-40, see also 49

⁶⁵ Keohane 2005: ix.

⁶⁶ Krasner 1982b: 358.

⁶⁷ McClelland 1966: 43, 56.

Scholars started to incorporate actors such as MNCs and processes such as “interdependence” into their agenda; additionally, a sub-field which would later become known as International Political Economy (IPE) rapidly developed. With the studies IR scholars were themselves more integrated into the economic discourse. “As research progressed”, Mastanduno explained, these scholars “became more systematic and self-conscious in borrowing concepts and insights from economics”.⁶⁸ Thus in addition to the intellectual capital accumulated by Schelling and Boulding – and under the intellectual current at that time when Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics* (1979) made the revolutionary though mistakenly-construed impacts that a system theory is to conceptualize the states as utility maximizers (to this I shall return in the next chapter) – the utilitarianists of the second generation appealed once again to the notion of rationality.⁶⁹ As Krasner recalled, whether to explicate the prospect of war or peace, conflict or cooperation, the conceptualization of “a world of rational self-seeking actors” had become the “prevailing intellectual orientations for analyzing social phenomena” in the 1980s.⁷⁰ Mesquita argued, for instance, that utilitarian reason could help the decision-makers to find the “necessary conditions for war”, and to identify the calculations which inform antagonistic leader’s “assessment of the expected costs and benefits associated with particular war-or-peace situations”.⁷¹ Gilpin argued not only that “we shall assume that rationality is not historically or culturally bound”, but that “the explanation of international political change is in large measure a matter of account for shifts in the slopes and positions of indifference curves of the states”.⁷² Keohane based his account of cooperation without an hegemon on the assumption that “states, the principle actors in world politics, are rational egoists”, which “have consistent, ordered preferences, and that they calculate

⁶⁸ Mastanduno 1998: 199-200. This article remains the best, succinct, account of the development.

⁶⁹ The connection between the second and first generation will be detailed in due course.

⁷⁰ Krasner 1982a: 6.

⁷¹ Mesquita 1981: 29, 6, 131-9.

⁷² Gilpin 1981: xii, 23.

costs and benefits...in order to maximize their utility in view of those preferences".⁷³

Indeed, whereas the first generation concentrated exclusively on the very predicament of the Cold War, the second generation had considerably expanded the boundary of utilitarian reason: Robert Gilpin's *War and Change in World Politics* (1981), Bruce Bueno de Mesquita's *The War Trap* (1981) and a range of pertinent essays (which spread across the 1980s), explained how even large-scale warfare (which Gilpin termed "hegemonic war") could be initiated by interest-maximizing states. Under the editorships of Stephen Krasner and Kenneth Oye, defining collections such as *International Regimes* (1982) and *Cooperation under Anarchy* (1985) explored the conditions under which cooperation could be established. These enquiries were further consolidated by Robert Axelrod's *The Evolution of Cooperation* (1984), Robert Keohane (*After Hegemony*, 1984), and Duncan Snidal's essays on the Prisoner's Dilemma⁷⁴, each of which demonstrated that rationality remained a productive concept which could be productively applied to the specific political exigencies of the 1980s.

Neorealism

In *War and Change in World Politics* (1981), Gilpin explores how the change of international system is conducted by the trail of military strength. For Gilpin, what concerns him most is neither the change of system entailing the transformation from one system to another, nor the one involves "interaction change" in the modifications of interactional process. Rather – overshadowed by the Soviet supremacy of the 1970s – Gilpin wanted to examine the change in system as "the rise and decline of the dominant states or empires that govern

⁷³ Keohane 1984: 66, 27.

⁷⁴ Snidal's three essays are: "The Game Theory of International Politics" 1985a, "The Limits of Hegemonic Stability Theory" 1985b, and "Coordination versus Prisoners' Dilemma" 1985c. Other influential Neorealists and neoliberals who had participated in this rationalizing movement included: Stein 1982, Lipson 1984, Grieco 1988,

the particular international system” or, more precisely, “the replacement of a declining dominant power by a rising dominant power”.⁷⁵ Notice Gilpin’s special conceptualization of international systematic change. First, for Gilpin, the change in system can no longer be tackled by any strategic manipulation but by sheer violence. And violence occurs on a large-scale level. The rise and fall of dominant power is described as a “hegemonic” war where the change of such a system “involves all of the states in the system; it is a world war”, and its maintenance entails the institutionalization of the status quo by creating hegemonic organizations “to advance particular sets of interests”.⁷⁶ Second, like the precursory utilitarian theorists (such as Schelling, who conceptualized conflict resolution as a variation upon the economics of bargaining), the “international system” is defined by Gilpin as “in effect an arena of calculation and interdependent decision making”, in which the maximizers of expected utility make their choices.⁷⁷

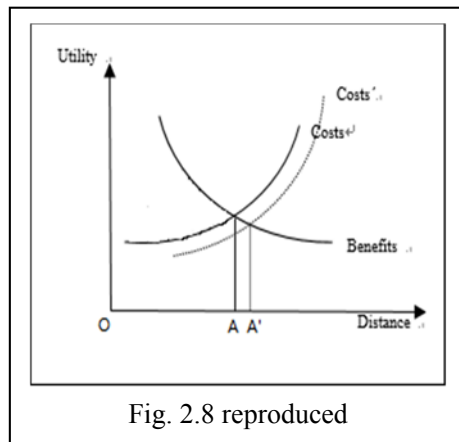
How is international political change within a system accomplished? Gilpin outlines five hypotheses in order to explain how systematic change is initiated, maintained and collapsed (see fig. 2.8). First, “an international system is stable (i.e. in a state of equilibrium) if no state believes it profitable to attempt to change the system”. Second, “a state will attempt to change the international system if the expected benefits exceed the expected costs (i.e. if there is an expected net gain)”. Third, “a state will seek to change the international system through territorial, political, and economic expansion until the marginal costs of further change are equal to or greater than the marginal benefits”. Fourth, “once an equilibrium between the costs and benefits of further change and expansion is reached, the tendency is for the economic costs of maintaining the status quo to rise faster than the economic capacity to supports the status quo”. Fifth, “if

⁷⁵ Gilpin 1981: 3, 40-3.

⁷⁶ Gilpin 1988: 600.

⁷⁷ Gilpin 1981: 38.

the disequilibrium in the international system is not resolved, then the system will be changed, and a new equilibrium reflecting the redistribution of power”.⁷⁸



These hypotheses are very complex. The role played by utilitarian rationality in explaining change and *de facto* conflict can be simplistically explained by reconsidering Boulding’s theory, on which Gilpin himself draws.⁷⁹

Rationality plays a crucially dualistic role here. First, the rationality of the potential challenger necessitates its response to the incentive of change. If the state is at point A, where neither marginal costs nor marginal benefits occur, then the state will not initiate war (hypothesis one). Yet, if the state expects that there are net benefits in conducting a war (when the curve of cost changes into costs’), then the state will strive for hegemony through the means of war (hypothesis two). Second, rationality directs to the point at which change is halted. As long as the state is rational, and expects that change can bring net benefits or innovations within the state that altered its cost (or benefit) curve (from costs to costs’), it will constantly expand (territorially, militarily, politically, and economically) until a new equilibrium at point A’ is reached (hypotheses three, four and five).⁸⁰

Gilpin’s explanation of hegemonic war in terms of an interest maximizer’s response to the change of slopes systematic change is but a change in calculation on the part of a potential hegemon who does not take others’ “calculation and interdependent decision making” into its own account. Mesquita’s *The War Trap* (1981), by contrast, demonstrate that the condition of war needs more relational calculation to determine. In a similar manner to Gilpin,

⁷⁸ These five hypotheses are:

⁷⁹ Gilpin 1981: 56.

⁸⁰ Gilpin 1981: 9-11.

Mesquita sought to “present a general theory of war and foreign conflict initiation and escalation”.⁸¹ But in contrast to Gilpin, who envisaged that the ultimate cause of war consists in a single state’s calculation in front of the “international system”, Mesquita instead asserted that it resided rather in the calculation into which the account of the *opponents’ reaction* must be taken. *Pace* Gilpin, whose rational state is challenging the “international system” which is waited to be changed, Mesquita’s rational agents are dueling against other *agents*, active, and able to undertake their own calculations.

Now suppose that there are two rational states – say a potential hegemon Row and actual one Column – who are in an adversarial relationship. Suppose further that U_R (or U_C) signifies the expected utility of the state Row (or Column) in initiating a bilateral war against his adversary Column (or Row), and P_R (or $1-P_R$) the possibility of successfulness of Row’s (or Column’s) war. Thence comes the formula⁸²

$$EU (R) = P_R (U_R - U_C) + (1 - P_R) (U_C - U_R)$$

In this formula the general cause of war resides in the calculation by Row when taking into account of Column’s expected utility. $(U_R - U_C)$ signifies the utility obtained if Row’s preference over Column’s (i.e. his triumph over Colum). And $P_R (U_R - U_C)$ represents the probability of such a net benefit when Row prevailed over Column. Conversely, $(1 - P_R) (U_C - U_R)$ denotes Row’s expected net gain in waging a war against Row. Since both of them cannot simultaneously have positive gains in conducting such a war – one of their utility must be negative – then the sum total of Row’s calculation will be either positive, if a war brings *more* net utility to Row than to Column, or negative, if Column’s net benefit in waging a war against Row exceeds the one of Row’s.

⁸¹ Mesquita 1981: ix.

⁸² The original formula is much complex, see Mesquita 1981: 47.

For Mesquita, the key point is not, as Fearon asserts,⁸³ that when *both* or *all* of the agents are expecting net benefits from conducting war or conflict, a fight can be initiated. Rather, when one of them (say, Column) expects net gain in waging war, then regardless of whatever outcomes may be procured by other agents (via the same calculation), there will inevitably be a war initiated by this very agent (i.e. state Column will start the war). The merit of Mesquita's formula is its inclusion of the opponent's calculation as influence, but not as determinants. Mesquita's key point, which can be seen as arguing against Gilpin, is that the condition of war needs to be defined by one agents' calculation that takes the opponent's calculation into account.

In this section, I have shown how rationality had been employed by Neorealists to delineate the conditions of war as a pessimistic response to the decadence of American hegemonic power. In the next, I shall show how Neoliberals have tried to answer to this question.

Neoliberalism (Part I)

Now we turn to the Neoliberal wing. Will the decline of the American power vis-à-vis the Soviets and the Western allies signify a return to conflict and the collapse of international institutions? Will institutions in world politics fall apart? The Neoliberal's replies are more optimistic. Many argue that international institutional cooperation will endure and even develop. "Rational-choice theory", Robert Keohane the leading Neoliberal thinker declared, "enables us to demonstrate that the pessimistic conclusions about cooperation often associated with realism are not necessarily valid".⁸⁴ Even if "by adopting the Realist model of rational egoism" as Gilpin and Mesquita did, Keohane continued, "the characteristic pessimism of Realism does not necessarily

⁸³ Fearon 1995: 386.

⁸⁴ Keohane 1984: 13.

follow”.⁸⁵ How can utilitarian rationality instead demonstrate that the prospect of institutional cooperation remains bright?

To give warning beforehand, the Neoliberal movement is such a complex one that it develops along three distinct lines which sometimes intersect, and which sometimes run parallel. And the supremacy of the Neoliberals is dependent no less on their concept of utilitarian rationality than upon their reinterpretations (such as Morgenthau’s rational Realism and Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics*) and subsequent recapitulation (in the language of utilitarian reason) of key Realist theories.

To begin with the first line: in 1980, Keohane published a rebellious article against hegemonic theory, contending that during the decade between 1967 and 1977, the undermined American power did not result in the breakdown of trade and monetary “regimes”.⁸⁶ Although the endurance of these regimes as a phenomena is highlighted, Keohane does not sufficiently explain why they persisted. Two years later, Keohane once again contended that in contrast to Gilpin’s pessimistic anticipation, those regimes could by themselves “help to compensate for eroding hegemony”. In this time, Keohane explicitly argued that the reason why such institutions could endure (and offset negative effects associated with eroding hegemony) was because of “The Demand for International Regimes” (1982, hereafter *Demand*).⁸⁷

Demand is an important contribution for a number of reasons. Yet in addition to the fact that it was published in an edited volume together with a number of other parallel efforts under the title of *International Regimes* (1982) – many contributions to this volume use utilitarian rationality as a foundation to show the origin and persistence of international regimes – it is in *Demand* that Keohane lays down the analytical foundation of Neoliberalism, which later develops into a book called *After Hegemony* (1984). For Keohane, the reasons

⁸⁵ Keohane 1984: 6.

⁸⁶ Keohane 1980.

⁸⁷ Keohane 1982: 166.

why international institutions endure and compensate the impacts of the decline of the American hegemony can be explained in three steps. Step one is to use “systemic constraint-choice analysis” and to construe states as inherent interest-maximizers that respond to the incentives (such as a market) provided by the system.

“In a systemic theory, the actors’ characteristics are given by assumption, rather than treated as variables; changes in outcomes are explained not on the basis of variations in these actor characteristics, but on the basis of changes in the attributes of the system itself [...] We assume that, in general, actors in world politics tend to respond rationally to constraints and incentives. Changes in the characteristics of the international system will alter the opportunity costs to actors of various courses of action, and will therefore lead to changes in behavior”.⁸⁸

Like Gilpin’s states that are responsible to change of slopes, Keohane also assumes the interest-maximizing actors are responsible “rationally to constraints and incentives”. Consequently, step two is to conceive of “a market for international regimes [in the same way as] one thinks of an economic market”. It is “on the basis of an analysis of relative prices and cost-benefit calculations, [that] actors decide which regimes to ‘buy’,”⁸⁹ accordingly actors “buy” (join) a regime in the market (system) because the benefit of membership is expected to outweigh the costs of joining it.

So far, as Keohane himself recognized, one has only explained why states maintain institutions (on the basis that the institutions are assumed to be preexistent and capable of offering net benefits to states). Nonetheless, a series of questions remain unclarified – these include: Why states have the *demand* to create a regime in the very first place. Will they still contribute to its

⁸⁸ Keohane 1982: 143-8, quotations at 143-5.

⁸⁹ Keohane 1982: 147.

maintenance even if the net benefit is in decline? If states can use resort to bilateral war to maximize interest, why will they not make bilateral agreement to avoid the cost of constructing regimes (as in a Schellingian form, by coordinating to maximize their interests?)

In reply to these questions Keohane asks theorists to proceed to the third step. In this step, states are assumed as capable of making more complex calculations than, say, Schelling's. Consider the question posed by Ronald Coase in "The Problem of Social Cost" (1960). Suppose that there are firms proposing to solve the problem of market failure, and each party wants to reach agreement with each other and create an institution which will subsequently alleviate the problem of externality.⁹⁰ For Coase, an agreement can be attainable if: (a) there is a legal framework establishing liability for actions; (b) both have perfect information; and (c) transaction costs in this bargaining are zero. Keohane *inverted* the Coase theorem and changed the direction of the causal chain. If what give rise to institutions, institutions can give back to them, then institutions must be capable of facilitating the establishment of the liability of legal framework (if there is none), the flowing of information (if there are few), and the maximization of the transaction costs (if they are high).⁹¹ And the realm that matches all these conditions of market failure is international relations. Since international politics is characterized by its anarchical condition – there is not a compulsory legal framework existing among the states; the distribution of information among them will be rather asymmetrical; and the transaction costs are very high between the states – to establish an institution can precisely alleviate these problems.

For Keohane, the crux is that states, as interest maximizers, can make such a calculation to create and maintain institutions. Hence, this "functional"

⁹⁰ Keohane (1989b: 28) recalled how his student introduced George Akerlof, Oliver Williamson and Ronald Coase's works to him which gave him "the 'aha' feeling" and "the realization that international regimes could be account for in ways that are parallel to the modern of the firm – that political market failures result from transactions costs and uncertainty, and that these failures could be corrected...through international institutions". Keohane refers particularly to Coase's (1960) article and Williamson's "A Dynamic Theory of Interfirm Behavior" (1965).

⁹¹ Keohane 1984: Ch.6.

usefulness of an institution generates the states' demands for creating and sustaining the regimes.⁹² As long as the rational states have the demand for reaching agreement and act in order to attenuate the problem of market failure in an anarchical, international system, the corollary of "Realist pessimism" necessarily loses its convincingness. But when he succeeded in demonstrating that in the absence of authority states would still have the demand to create institutions, Keohane also started to employ an interpretive strategy.

In 1983, a year after *Demand*, Keohane turned to the second interpretative line. In his extremely influential essay which launched the second line (under the title of "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond", 1983) – Keohane depicted realism as a "tradition" and "research program" which was indispensable for analyzing world politics because of its "focus on power, interests, and rationality".⁹³ Indeed, the realist preoccupation with power, interest and rationality had already been evidenced in Morgenthau's formula that politics could not be rationally understood unless via the concept of interest defined in terms of power, as I have just shown. But Keohane has an entirely different understanding of the assumption of "rationality" – in quoting the same passage as I have invoked (Morgenthau's first rhetorical move), Keohane argued that

"In reconstructing state calculations, Thucydides and Morgenthau both assume that states will act to protect their power positions, perhaps even to the point of seeking to maximize their power [...] World politics can be analyzed as if states were unitary rational actors, carefully calculating costs of alternative courses of action and seeking to maximize their expected utility, although doing so under conditions of uncertainty and without necessarily having sufficient information about alternatives or resources

⁹² Keohane (1982: 149, 1984: Ch.6, 1994: 36-7) named his own approach as first functional then contractual.

⁹³ Keohane 1983: 159. The other articles fall into this group see Keohane 1986, 1988.

(time or otherwise) to conduct a full review of all possible courses of action".⁹⁴

In a sharp contrast to Morgenthau's *own* denotation of rationality, Keohane was imposing a utilitarian interpretation on Morgenthau's original formulation and on the whole allegedly realist "tradition". First, it imputes a neoclassical-economics to Morgenthau who has learnt the theory of rationality from Clausewitz. Second, it misrepresents Morgenthau's remark on reason (thus perpetuating the misconception that Morgenthau's reason has no concern with the end of action). Having rationalized Morgenthau, Keohane also subsequently discovered that the concept of utilitarian rationality is also a critical element within Waltz's *Theory*:

"The link between system structure and actor behavior is forged by the rationality assumption, which enables the theorists to predict that leaders will respond to the incentives and constraints imposed by their environments. Taking rationality as a constant permits one to attribute variations in state behavior to variations in characteristics of the international system [...] Thus the rationality assumption – as we will see in examining Waltz's balance of power theory – is essential to the theoretical claims of Structural Realism (Note 15)".⁹⁵

Keohane clarified in Note 15 that "Waltz denies that he relies on the rationality assumption; but I argue in section II that he requires it for his theory of the balance of power to hold".⁹⁶ Waltz, indeed, has already stressed, in his *Theory of International Politics* (1979), that "the first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system", and "states

⁹⁴ Keohane 1983: 164-5.

⁹⁵ Keohane 1983: 167.

⁹⁶ Keohane 1983: 201 [fn. 15].

balance power rather than maximize it”.⁹⁷ (I shall further explicate on this in the next chapter.) Yet ironically enough, after proclaiming that Waltz’s theory of balance of power will be rely upon the rationality assumption, Keohane (in “section II”) drew the striking conclusion, which he himself, italicized, that “*Balance of power theory is inconsistent with the assumption frequently made by Realists that states ‘maximize power’.*”⁹⁸

Inconsistency indeed – between the states that maximize their own power/interests and the ones that balance each other there has to be one choice – but it is a contradiction or binary choice constructed by Keohane *himself* to reveal how the realist tradition was inconsistent within itself.

But why did Keohane trap Realism into rationality? The answer is that if rationality is indispensable for the whole Realist tradition but simultaneously incompatible with the other tradition of balance of power, then the contradiction has to be resolved. Realism, namely, must be *remedied* into “a modified structural research program”. In Keohane’s view, such a modification must reject Realist’s emphasis on (the balance of) power but retain the rationality assumption. “This research program”, he maintained, “would pay much more attention to the roles of institutions and rules than does Structural Realism”.⁹⁹ It is here that the line of interpretation intersects with the one of Keohanean theorization.

Neoliberalism (Part II)

Having planted the seed for developing the second interpretive line – Keohane would return to this line later on – Keohane moved back to the first line, thus continuing his theoretical exposition of how states demand institutions to enhance their interests. The first line soon culminated in *After Hegemony* (1984, hereafter *Hegemony*), which is widely recognized as the defining work of

⁹⁷ Waltz 1979: 126-7.

⁹⁸ Keohane 1983: 174, emphasis in original.

⁹⁹ Keohane 1983: 192, 194.

Neoliberalism. In comparison with *Demand*, which lays down the analytical foundation for *Hegemony*, there occurs a significant change in Keohane's account. Whereas previously Keohane speaks of Coase's language of market failure, in *Hegemony* Keohane begins with an echo of Carr's critique of "the harmony of interest". Accordingly he stresses that institutional cooperation is not built on such a utopian doctrine but on the "adjustment of policy".¹⁰⁰

Keohane's change of language has two underlying implications. The first corresponds to his concern to demonstrate that even if by adopting the Realist assumptions of rational egoism, the pessimistic consequence may not necessarily follow. The second is more crucial: it is here that the first line initiated by Keohane intersects with the third (which originates in the work of Arthur Stein and Robert Axelrod).

The third line is profoundly shaped by two thinkers' thoughts. One is Carr's critique of the Liberal Institutionalists' "harmony of interest", a harmony which presupposes that human reason can intellectually link together, enhance moral interdependence and exercise collective control over peace and war. The other is the game of Prisoners' Dilemma (which had been deeply studied by Rapoport). Under the influences of Carr and Rapoport,¹⁰¹ both Stein and Axelrod seek to demonstrate how the interest maximizers can develop extensive institutional cooperation, even under difficult conditions in which disharmony and defections are prevalent. In 1981, Axelrod's study of how cooperation under the Prisoners' Dilemma could be fostered was released in embryonic form.¹⁰² Although his study did not initially enjoy a substantial impact (this only occurred subsequently, when Axelrod developed it into *The Evolution of Cooperation* (1984), it had already been made clear that the strategy, devised by Rapoport as Tit for Tat, *could* help cooperation emerge out of the "rational egoists" when they play a game of Prisoners' Dilemma in a sequential and

¹⁰⁰ Keohane 1984: Ch.4 (esp. 52-3).

¹⁰¹ See more in Stein 1990: 18, Axelrod 1984: Ch.2.

¹⁰² Axelrod 1981.

iterated way.¹⁰³ While Axelrod was laboring on writing up *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Arthur Stein published his “Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchical World” (1982), an article which appeared in the collective volume of *International Regimes*, and which was soon to evidence an enormous impact and influence.¹⁰⁴

Stein’s demonstration of how an interest-maximizing actor will create and maintain institutions is complex. First, Stein uses Schelling’s focal point to reproduce Carr’s critique of the Kantian-rational theory of harmony of interest. If the “rationality” can coordinate the actors’ expectation to maximize interests (see fig. 2.7),¹⁰⁵ Stein argues, then there is no need to create institutional cooperation at all. Suppose that there are two agents, Row and Column, who are playing games in a *one shot and simultaneous* way (Fig. 2.10, 2.11). In these games there will be no need of institutional cooperation, since both agents can, by their pursuit of interest maximization, be led *automatically* to the Pareto-optimal equilibrium. Both Row and Column will choose [5, 5] instead of any others.

	I	II
I	5, 5	1, 3,
II	3, 1	1, 1

Fig. 2.10 Focal Point

	I	II
I	5, 5	1, 4
II	4, 1	3, 3

Fig. 2.11 Coordination

Second, Stein contends that institutional cooperation, instead of deriving from the harmony of interest, is in fact built on the actors’ maximization of self-interest which abandons their own individualistic pursuit of interest. Accordingly, he argues that “[t]here are times when rational self-interested calculation leads actors to abandon independent decision making in favor of joint decision

¹⁰³ Axelrod 1984.

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. Grieco 1988: 117ff.

¹⁰⁵ Stein seems to conflate Carr’s Kantian conception of rationality with his utilitarian one.

making”.¹⁰⁶ Suppose once again that both agents are playing the games of Prisoners’ Dilemma and Battles of Sexes, as the following two figures illustrate.

	I	II
I	3, 3	0, 5
ii	5, 0	1, 1

Fig. 2.12 Prisoners’ Dilemma

	I	II
I	3, 4	1, 2
Ii	2, 1	4, 3

Fig. 2.13 Battle of Sexes

Suppose in these two games Row and Column make simultaneous and one-shot choices. Unlike Schelling, Stein stresses that these two games have to be played simultaneously in order to prevent the actors using strategic maneuver to maximize their individual interest. In both games the play leads to the creation of institutions. The Prisoners’ Dilemma (see Fig. 2.11) originates an incentive for the establishment of collaborative institution to ward off the temptation for each to defect. Without a regime to regulate their decisions the ultimate outcome is worse for both actors, [1, 1]. Like Schelling, Stein points out that collaborative institutions need the actors’ promise to abandon their individualistic pursuit of interest. But unlike Schelling’s promise that may turn out to be a scam of assurance (that is why the problem of credibility is involved), Stein’s promise relies on the creation of institution to enforce promise. When Row and Colum play the game on the right (see Fig. 2.13), they need institutions to coordinate: the optimal choices for both lie in [3, 4] and [4, 3], and an institution will be in need if both intend to eschew the smaller payoffs and consequently converge upon the same choice. Thus, even if within an environment of disharmony of interest, as Stein sums up, “individualistic self-interested calculations leads them to prefer joint decision making because independent self-interested behavior can result in undesirable or suboptimal outcomes”.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Stein 1982: 132.

¹⁰⁷ Stein 1982: 120.

Whereas for Stein the rational states need to create different types of institution to cope with various situations, Axelrod subsequently demonstrates, in *The Evolution of Cooperation*, that cooperation can be fostered out of the most difficult game that states play in a way different from all previous account.¹⁰⁸

Consider that there are two egoistic actors Row and Column playing a game of the Prisoners' Dilemma. Suppose, first, that in contrast to Stein's Prisoners' Dilemma, Row and Column are moving sequentially, in the same way as in Schelling's game. Suppose, second, unlike Schelling and Kahn's design, that the game is played *repeatedly* rather than one shot where n round of moves will be undertaken. Suppose further, like Stein also stipulates, that the strategic manipulation envisaged by Schelling cannot be used here, namely that "strategic maneuvers, such as promise and threat, are prohibited".¹⁰⁹ Suppose finally that the payoff obtained from subsequent round of play is always worth less than the previous one – a "shadow of the future" is cast on the present move – at the discount rate of w ($0 < w < 1$).¹¹⁰ Given the fact that within each round both Row and Column can choose i or ii, I or II, Axelrod calculates all the possible outcomes. In adopting various strategies and the conclusion that when both agents adopt the strategy of "Tit for Tat" – a "policy of cooperating on the first move and then doing whatever the other player did on the previous move"¹¹¹ – they could obtain in total the highest utility among various strategies.

	I	II
i	3, 3	0, 5
ii	5, 0	1, 1

Fig. 2.14

When both agents decide on Tit for Tat, or the one Tit for Tat and the other Defect, or both choose to Defect, their individual gain is:

¹⁰⁸ Axelrod 1984: 29.

¹⁰⁹ Axelrod 1984: 11

¹¹⁰ If $n \rightarrow \infty$, and $0 < w < 1$, then $wn = 0$.

¹¹¹ Axelrod 1981: 308, see also 1984, Ch.3.

$$\begin{aligned}
S_{TT \text{ vs. } TT} &= 3 + w3 + w^23 + \dots + w^{(n-1)}3 = 3/1 - w \\
S_{D \text{ vs. } TT} &= 5 + w + w^2 + \dots + w^{(n-1)} = 5 + (w/1 - w) \\
S_{D \text{ vs. } D} &= 1 + w + w^2 + \dots + w^{(n-1)} = 1 + (w/1 - w)
\end{aligned}$$

Within the three possible strategies, the second is evidently superior to the third. But the relation between $[3/1 - w]$ and $[5 + (w/1 - w)]$ remains indeterminate. For Axelrod, as long as w is sufficiently large – if $[3/1 - w > 5 + w/1 - w]$ then $[w > 0.5]$ – then Tit-for-Tat can bring relatively more utility to the agent.

It is on the basis of these general efforts by Axelrod and Stein that Keohane could highlight the distinction between harmony and cooperation,¹¹² a fact which was formally recognized when the two lines were incorporated into a single format with the with the publication of *Cooperation under Anarchy* (1985). In this volume, which represented the culmination of Neoliberal movement, Axelrod and Keohane co-authored an essay and systematically restated the guiding principles of Neoliberalism (which merges the first line with the third.¹¹³ Indeed, although Keohane drew on a Rational-Choice form and Axelrod (and Stein) on Game Theory, the similarities which conjoin the Neoliberals appear to be pervasive. One of the most striking resemblances originates within the manner in which they sharply distinguish cooperation and harmony; in addition, both also seek to demonstrate that even in the context of Realist “rational egoistic” assumptions, extensive cooperation is still feasible. This aspect becomes even more pronounced in Stein’s use of Schelling to endorse Carr’s critique and Axelrod’s use of Rapoport’s Tit-for-Tat to study the Prisoners’ Dilemma. Keohane, as he himself stated more clearly in 1990, “deliberately adopted the Realist assumption of egoism, as well as rationality, in order to demonstrate that there are possibilities for cooperation even on Realist premises”.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Axelrod & Keohane 1985: 85.

¹¹³ See Also Snidal 1985c.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Katzenstein 1996: 15.

One year later, the collection entitled *Realism and Its Critics* (1986) under Keohane's editorship came to the forefront. Together with the participants' critique of Waltz's "utilitarianism", Keohane's second line was taken up again – in his introductory essay which resumes his old undertaking (namely rationalizing realism), Keohane reiterated how rationality had played a critical role within realism:

"Morgenthau's conception of rationality is clearer than his view of power. Although he does not offer a formal definition in *Politics Among Nations*, he seems to accept the conception that is standard in neoclassical economics. To say that governments act rationally in this sense means that they have consistent, ordered preferences, and that they calculate the costs and benefits of all alternative policies in order to maximize their utility [...] Morgenthau explicitly acknowledged that the assumption of rationality was not descriptively accurate [...] even though such an assumption is not always descriptively accurate [...] the analyst can infer actions from interests, and thereby construct an explanatory theory of behavior [...] Morgenthau's sophisticated use of the rationality assumption was consistent both with that of Thucydides and those of later realists and neorealists, including Waltz"¹¹⁵

Keohane grasps Morgenthau's sophisticated way of deploying reason. But whereas Morgenthau's conception of rationality is neither simplistically clear nor economic, Keohane construes that Morgenthau's notion of rationality is even "clearer" than his idea of power because he accepts one definition that is "standard in neoclassical economics". Having depicted Morgenthau, Thucydides and Waltz as utilitarian rationalists, Keohane was finally able to nail

¹¹⁵ Keohane 1986: 11.

realists and Neoliberals down together in his 1988 presidential address that posed the demarcation and sparked debate within the discipline ever since:

“Realist and Neorealist theories are avowedly rationalistic, accepting what Hebert Simon has referred to as a ‘substantive’ conception of rationality [...] Even though the assumption of substantive rationality does not compel a particular set of conclusions about the nature or evolution of international institutions, it has been used in fruitful ways to explain behavior, including institutionalized behavior, in international relations [...] Indeed, the rationalistic program is heuristically so powerful precisely because [...] with such a record of accomplishment, and a considerable number of interesting but still untested hypotheses about reasons for persistence, change, and compliance, cannot be readily dismissed. Indeed, the greatest weakness of the reflective school lies not in deficiencies in their critical arguments but in the lack of a clear reflective research program that could be employed by students of world politics”.¹¹⁶

In Retrospect of the Neo-Neo Theories: A Brief Overview

The “Neo-Neo synthesis”,¹¹⁷ which appears to be so formidable as if relying upon the single notion of rationality, theorists can explain almost all the significant phenomenon within the international arena – has three pillars. The first is the accounts of war by Gilpin and Mesquita, through which the concept of interest maximization appears as historically and culturally independent. The second, which contains bifurcations and confluences of two directions, is the accounts of cooperation by Keohane, Axelrod, and Stein (which conceive of rational actor endeavoring to reduce transaction costs and advance interest in different games). The third is the constructed “tradition” of “Rationalism” being

¹¹⁶ Keohane 1988: 381, 392.

¹¹⁷ Waever 1996: 163.

“avowedly rationalistic” and which is indispensable to the previous two: a tradition which allegedly originated in Thucydides which, passes down to Morgenthau and Waltz, and which manifests itself in both the Neo-Neo theoretical works.

Notice that four problems revolve around the concept. First, compared with the rational deterrence theorists, the concept of utilitarian rationality is applied to the explanation of a broad range of phenomenon. It shifted from the narrow focus on deterrence and conflict resolution during the embryonic period of utilitarian when the tension between of superpowers had reached its zenith, to the much broader phenomenon of war, discord, and cooperation (largely in response to the various challenges that arose during the period of superpower détente). The Neo-Neo scholars can explain almost all the significant phenomenon within the international arena. As a consequence, the boundary of the explanandum of utilitarian reason appears to have been vastly expanded.

Second, the expansion of utilitarian reason is also achieved by a particularly utilitarian, homogenized, reading of other theorists. After the Neo-Neo movement, the image of Morgenthau as a utilitarian rationalist had been erroneously taken for granted, and Waltz was accordingly widely read, and interpreted, as a utilitarian rationalist. Indeed, Keohane’s rationalizing endeavors were so successful that in 2001 when Mearsheimer issued his *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, the idea of utilitarian rationality became a “bedrock” assumption, allegedly underlying the whole realist tradition.¹¹⁸ After Keohane’s utilitarian readings, the Realists are trapped into the utilitarian language: it is now the Realists’ turn to show that even if based on a Neoliberal idea of rationality the optimistic prospect of institutional cooperation would not necessarily follow! Both Grieco’s “Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism” (1988) and

¹¹⁸ Mearsheimer 2001: 30-1.

Mearsheimer's "The False of Promise of International Institutions" (1994/1995) are typical cases in point.¹¹⁹

Third, Keohane's utilitarian reading also incurred doubt, objection, and clarification, although the voices are unexpectedly feeble. Waltz, for one instance, issued a clarification in his "Reply to My Critics" (1986):

"Contrary to his [Keohane] statement, I do not differ with him over rationality, except semantically. I prefer to state the rationality assumption differently. My preference is based partly on fear that 'rationality' carries the wrong connotations. Since making foreign policy is such a complicated business, one cannot expect of political leaders the nicely calculated decisions that the word 'rationality' suggests. More significantly, my preference is based on the importance I accord, and Keohane denies, to the process of selection that takes place in competitive system. In structural-functional logic, behaviors are selected for their consequences."¹²⁰

For Waltz, rationality might be seen as central to his theory. But it has to connote a differently "semantic" meaning than the one construed by Keohane, pointing to the "structural-functional logic" and the "process of selection" that takes place in "competitive system". Rather than serving as an idea of cool-head calculation by the decision makers in foreign policy – notice Waltz's somehow peculiar understanding of Keohane's idea of rationality – it entails the selection of behavior according to "their consequences". This "structural" rationality

¹¹⁹ Due to space limits only brief discussion is allowed here. For Greico, Keohane and the Neoliberals overlooked the "impact of anarchy on the preferences of actions of states". Instead of believing that "states' utility function" (U) would be "in direct proposition to its payoff" (V) – thus the more institutions the better for reducing the transaction costs for these "rational egoist" actors as Neoliberal expected (since $U=V$) – a state depicted by Realists would contrastingly calculate relative gains, deducing the relative advance that may be accumulatively procured by others and turned against itself.¹¹⁹ (Hence the new equation, $U=V - k(W - V)$, where W is the total payoff obtained by all the participants, k the coefficient of sensitivity to such a gap). Keohane's claim for a single avowedly rationalistic tradition synthesizing Neo-Neo theories is untied into what Powell named "The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate" (1994). See esp. Mearsheimer 1994/5.

¹²⁰ Waltz 1986: 43-4.

conceived of by Waltz, as I shall expound in the next chapter, means following the anarchical ordering principle designated by the system as a kind of rules of the game, which is the very opposite to the one Keohane imputes to him (which instead conceives of an interest maximizer).

Fourth, the privilege claimed to utilitarian rationality by the Neo-Neo theorists also greatly stimulates the exploration for alternative conceptions of reason. One of the efforts, as I shall explicate in the next chapter, is to conceptualize rationality as dependent on the rules of a game, a conception which is both constitutive and regulative. Theorists such as Nicholas Onuf and Friedrich Kratochwil are representative in their works around the turn of the 1990s. Another consists in the idea of “historical reason” that will be canvassed in the last chapter. Christian Reus-Smit’s thesis – rationality as a culturally and historically contingent form of consciousness, a very opposite to Gilpin’s unhistorical conception of rationality – will also be engaged at that point. Indeed, from a historical point of view, utilitarian rationality had as homogenized some languages of reason as stimulated the development of others in a negative sense.

(iii) “Bring the State Back in?” Endogenous Rationalists in the 1990s

In the standard disciplinary history, the collapse of the USSR and end of the Cold War is claimed to have dealt a fatal blow to the Neo-Neo theories. The unexpected termination of the Cold War seems to have ravaged all the efforts of the Neorealists and Neoliberals.¹²¹ The Constructivists seized this opportunity, soon establishing a new paradigm to replace the Neo-Neos. Hopf, for one instance, declared that Constructivist could “suggest a research agenda” that provided “alternative understanding of mainstream international relations puzzles”.¹²²

¹²¹ See e.g. Wendt 1999: 4.

¹²² Hopf 1998: 171-2.

But the foregoing story is inaccurate. The idea of utilitarian reason withstood the watershed of the end of the Cold War, and the discipline experienced a new wave of utilitarian movement that was very powerful in renovating the utilitarian framework. Notice, however, the peculiarity of this movement: the theorists participating in it endeavor to wage a war on two fronts, trying to seize a “middle ground” between the Neo-Neos and Constructivists. (This “middle ground” is fundamentally different from Adler’s “middle ground” which is between Neorealists/liberals and Postmodernists.¹²³) On the one hand, they are dissatisfied with the Neoliberals and Neorealists, arguing that the utilitarian conception of rationality is undermined not because it has gone too far, but because it has not gone far enough in unpacking the enclosed state box. To simply assume that states are interest-maximizing actors and that they respond merely to the *exogenous* incentives offered by the international system (recall Gilpin) or international institution (recall Keohane) is not enough. Why does the initiation of hegemonic war *become* an agent’s interest? Why do the agents demand institutional cooperation in the first place? The Neo-Neos need to answer those questions. On the other hand, in the face of the challenges posed by Constructivists, which center around the fact that utilitarian explanations have been confined to material and unitary interest, the participants in this movement, who want to retain the power of (utilitarian) reason as a productive line of enquiry, at the same time endeavor to revamp utilitarian rationality by bringing culture and domestic institution back into account.

It is within this background that these “endogenous rationalists” (my term) turn the concept of utilitarian rationality to the agent itself. Their aim is clear. Whereas in the previous two waves the interest maximized has been taken for granted, the third wave utilitarian theorizations focus precisely upon the process of the preference formation *per se*. Notice the particularity of their demand. First, unlike the Neo-Neo theorists, they want to show that interest cannot be

¹²³ Adler 1997: 321.

assumed. If the state wants to initiate a war, or maintain an institution, then the origin of the preferences must be clarified. The preference formation is by no means an exogenous process determined by the external incentives; rather, problems such as who is authorized, under what rules, in which cultural background, to maximize one preference other than another, have to be elucidated.

Second, like the Neo-Neo theorists, it is by using the concept of rationality in a special way that these endogenous rationalists show how interests are generated. In a similar to their forbearers, they conceptualize state as an interest-maximizer comprising interest-maximizers (plural) rather than as a unitary entity. They want to show that through a “two step” theory¹²⁴ – in the first the state is assumed to derive the preferences out of the domestic and cultural context, and then lets them be ranked and the optimal preference maximized by the actor in its international conduct – that the endogenous process of how interest is made to be maximized can be revealed.

Their voices had been frequently heard in form of individual articles. In 1991, H. Milner published her essay on “The Assumption of Anarchy” which paved the way for her latter incorporation of domestic politics into utilitarian rationality. The essay was later collected into D. Baldwin’s *Neorealism and Neoliberalism* (1993), with which V. Rittberger’s *Regime Theory and International Relations* (1993), and *Ideas and Foreign Policy* (1993) under the editorship of J. Goldstein and Keohane were released simultaneously. In all those edited volumes (especially the latter two), participants were demanding that both the state and culture be brought back into the account of a rational agent’s action. Again, in 1996, P.J. Katzenstein’s *The Culture of National Security* (1996) as an edited volume was issued in which many theorists tried to aggregate identity and rationality in various ways. Later on, A. Moravcsik’s “Taking Preference Seriously” (1997), Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner’s *Exploration and*

¹²⁴ Typically see Lergo 1997.

Contestation in the Study of World Politics (1998), and finally Lake and Powell's *Strategic Choice and International Relations* (1999) brought the development of utilitarian rationality into another climax at the turn of the millennium.¹²⁵

How to illuminate the preference formation process? I shall direct my discussion towards two branches: the first is domestic cultures, norms, and identity; the second is domestic institutions. Let me first explain how the cultural variant of the endogenous rationalists renovates the utilitarian framework.

The Cultural Rationalists

For the Cultural Rationalists, utilitarian rationality is not only compatible with the explanations of a cultural (or Constructivist) kind, but also capable of disclosing how states maximize a certain cultural interest. This requires the incorporation of identity, norms, culture, and domestic institutions into the utilitarian framework, endeavoring to “consider interests and preferences to be socially constructed”.¹²⁶ “Cultural explanations”, Kahler argued, “are a means of enriching models of state choice, not an instrument for overturning them”.¹²⁷ Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner proclaimed that “Constructivists seek to understand how preferences are formed...prior to the exercise of instrumental rationality”.¹²⁸ “Norms”, Kowert and Lergo maintained, “affect not only actor interests but also the ways actors connect their preferences to policy choices”.¹²⁹ Finnemore and Sikkink declared the inseparability of the two, arguing that “Rationality cannot be separated from any politically significant episode of normative influence or normative change, just as the normative context conditions any episode of rational choice”.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Other enterprises include Fearon 1994.

¹²⁶ Johnston 1996: 264.

¹²⁷ Kahler 1998: 294.

¹²⁸ Katzenstein, Keohane, & Krasner 1998: 41.

¹²⁹ Kowert & Lergo 1996: 463.

¹³⁰ Finnemore & Sikkink 1998: 248.

Consider two influential examples. The first is laid down by Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein (hereafter JWK) under the name of “Norms, Identity and Culture in National Security” (1996).¹³¹ See the Fig. 2.15 below.

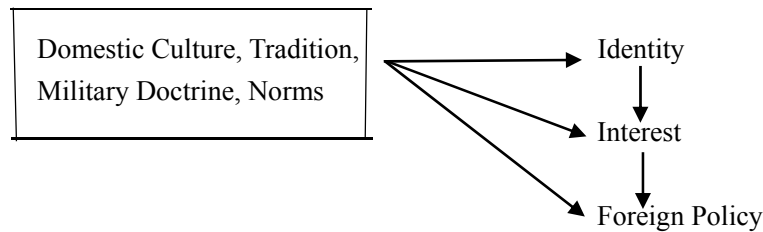


Fig. 2.15

For JWK, the impacts of culture (etc.) on foreign policy can be clearly seen in the cultural influences on preference formation. Domestic cultures, traditions and even military doctrines, are incorporated into such a framework. In one route, they inform identity, and identity informs interest, which decides the interest to be maximized in foreign policy. In another route, culture shapes interest, which will in the end be pursued as a preference in foreign policy. Kier, who shows in her article how military doctrine can shape foreign policy (JWK’s framework is a summarization on the basis of Kier’s argument), makes a nice demonstration. For Kier, a state’s initiation of a hegemonic war, such as Germany’s struggle for supremacy in the Second World War, is considerably pre-determined through “the ways in which culture and the meanings that actors attach to certain policies shape actors’ interests”.¹³² Instead of waiting for the “incentive” provided by the international system, the initiation of a hegemonic war may be predetermined as an interest by the military doctrine. (Notice, however, that the last link by beginning from culture and ending with policy may skip and subvert the utilitarian framework.)

Consider the second example by Goldstein and Keohane, entitled “Ideas and Foreign Policy” (1993). Goldstein and Keohane formulate the following table. See Fig. 2.16 below.

¹³¹ Jepperson, Wendt & Katzenstein 1996.

¹³² Kier 1996: 187.

Fig. 2.16

	Worldviews	Principled Belief	Causal Belief
Road Map			
Equilibria			
Institutionalization			

In this table, the ideas are divided into three categories: worldviews, principled beliefs, and causal beliefs (horizontal level).¹³³ Worldviews are those ideas of the broadest extent, including religious or scientific outlook. Principled beliefs have a more limited boundary, serving as normative structures that guide actions. In the end there is causal belief, which is defined as providing “guides for individuals on how to achieve their objectives” and implying “strategies for the attainment of goals”.¹³⁴

Having posed the taxonomy of ideas, Goldstein and Keohane explain how these three kinds of ideas can leverage influence over foreign policy (the vertical table on the left). To begin with the road map: worldviews, principled and causal beliefs, all can shape strategic interest by serving as road maps:

“People’s preferences for particular policy outcomes are not given but acquired. World views and principled beliefs structure people’s views about the fundamental nature of human life and the morality of practices and choices [...] To understand the formation of preferences, we need to understand what ideas are available and how people choose among them.”

The causal beliefs, Goldstein and Keohane continued, could also “help determine which of many means will be used to reach desired goals and therefore help to provide actors with strategies with which to further their objectives”.¹³⁵

¹³³ Ideas are defined fundamentally as “beliefs” by Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 3.

¹³⁴ Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 10.

¹³⁵ Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 13-4.

The three endogenous ideas can also have an impact on the equilibria that reverses the process described by Stein and Keohane himself. Recall Schelling's focal points and Stein's game of the battle of sexes (Fig. 2.12). For Goldstein and Keohane, ideas can shape interest because they can serve as focal point, "alleviating coordination problems arising from the absence of unique equilibrium".¹³⁶ Whereas in Stein's account institutions are devised for converging the individual choices on the same equilibrium, Goldstein and Keohane argue that the reverse process may have occurred. The endogenous ideas, which can first of all contribute to the convergence of expectations, is capable of being institutionalized as organization, and are subsequently manifested as the "incentives of those in the organization and those whose interests are served by it".¹³⁷

For the Cultural Rationalists, utilitarian rationality is more than compatible with the Constructivists' emphasis on the impacts of ideas and identities: the utilitarian-rational framework can rather demonstrate how ideas makes influences on the agents' actions.

Domestic Institutionalists

Near the end of the 1990s there appeared two outstanding articles that broadened the conceptual space of utilitarian rationality by taking domestic institutions into account: Andrew Moravcsik's "Taking Preference Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics" (1997) and Helen Milner's "Rationalizing Politics" (1998).¹³⁸ Each cogently demonstrates that the subject of utilitarian rationality needs to be broadened. Although the two scholars take somehow different stances towards "rational institutionalism", they all concur that the utilitarian conception of rationality remains indispensable for political study and

¹³⁶ Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 17.

¹³⁷ Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 20.

¹³⁸ See Moravcsik 1997, Milner 1998. With great unfortunateness and due to the limitedness of the space, there are some fascinating essays that scattered in the already mentioned edited works will be incapable to be reconsidered here, such as Zurn 1993, and Kahler 1998, Rogowski 1999

requires development. To use Milner's statement as an illustration: where rational institutionalism is wrong is not because it has gone too far, but because it has not advanced far enough to consider domestic institutions, like their international counterparts, are interest-maximization aggregators.¹³⁹ Milner enunciated that "one means for making this work more systematic and cumulative is through the use of rational institutionalist approaches" to "systematically explore the consequences of strategic interaction among actors with diverse preferences when facing differing political institutions [in both domestic and international realms]".¹⁴⁰

Two interweaved assumptions form the commonly theoretical basis for both thinkers: all associations – societal groups, states, and international institutions – are interest maximizers under constraints *and* are non-unitary entities. For Moravcsik, the "fundamental actors" in international politics are "individuals and private groups, who are on the average rational and risk-averse and who organize exchange and collective action to promote differential interests under constraints imposed by material scarcity, conflicting values, and variations in societal influence".¹⁴¹ States, likewise, represent "some subset of domestic society, on the basis of whose interests state officials define state preferences and act purposively in world politics". This view of the state as interest-maximizer comprising sub-state interest maximizers is also shared by Milner. "Institutions", Milner suggested, "are the means by which the diverse preferences of individuals are aggregated into choices or outcomes for the collective."¹⁴² States' preferences, rather than arbitrarily assumed, must be viewed as an outcome of "the strategic interaction among agents within these institutions".¹⁴³ As Rogowski once pointed out, these "strategic-choice approach[es]" were crucial for understanding how "domestic institutions" could

¹³⁹ Milner 1998: 140.

¹⁴⁰ Milner 1998: 138.

¹⁴¹ Moravcsik 1997: 516.

¹⁴² Milner 1998: 120-1.

¹⁴³ Milner 1998: 120.

exert influences on the “process of aggregating the preferences of variously individuals and groups”.¹⁴⁴

On the basis of these two inextricable assumptions, the two scholars have constructed slightly different theories. To start from Moravcsik, his “Liberal Theory” assumes that the states’ preferences will be aggregated in a sequential and repeated way. “Collective state behavior [in international politics]”, Moravcsik explicated, “should be analyzed as a *two-stage process* of constrained social choice”.¹⁴⁵ In the first stage, the sub-state groups strategically interact with each other, imputing their preferences into the state. In the second stage the same process is repeated. The preferences of the individuals and groups (or the configuration of their preferences) will be transmitted into the state. The state, having defined its preferences by aggregating the sub-state groups’ preferences, will projects them in turn to the international terrain, using “debate, bargain, or fight [to particular agreements]” to prevail over the others. In the end, “the configuration of interdependent state preferences determines state behavior.”¹⁴⁶

Milner’s account is more dynamic. For Milner, the aggregation of state’s preferences is undertaken through the play of a “two-level”, simultaneous, game. Like Moravcsik, Milner conceives of the state as aggregating and maximizing the (configuration of) sub-state groups’ preferences. Yet quite unlike Moravcsik, Milner, drawing on Dahl and Putnam, argues that the state should be regarded as a “polyarchy”, where the sub-state “actors internally bargain with one another, while they also bargain externally”.¹⁴⁷ In addition to the inclusion of the international dimension into the game is Milner’s original emphasis that the state’s preferences are co-determined by the simultaneity of the two games played. In other words:

¹⁴⁴ Rogowski 1999: 136, 113.

¹⁴⁵ Moravcsik 1997: 544, emphasis in original.

¹⁴⁶ Moravcsik 1997: 516-20.

¹⁴⁷ Milner 1998: 136.

“Bargaining among executives, legislatures, bureaucracies, and interest groups or the public is structured by national political institutions to yield particular collective outcomes [...] they usually embed this domestic game within an international one, so that only outcomes that lie within the acceptable range of both domestic and foreign actors will emerge”.¹⁴⁸

Consider the following figure used by Milner.¹⁴⁹

		Environment	
Actor		Rational Choice (one state)	Strategic Interaction (two states)
	State as unit	Perfect Market	Game Theory
	State as polyarchy	Domestic Sources	Two-Level Games

Fig. 2.17

Whereas Moravcsik falls into the low-left quadrant, making a progress than the Neo-Neo theorists who regard the state as a rational unity entity (upper-left quadrant), Milner intends to open up the state to both domestic and international actors (low-right quadrant). In contrast to game theorist such as Stein and Axelrod, who assume games are played one-dimensionally against other states (upper-right quadrant), the state's preferences is generated in Milner's account by the joint play of a domestic game and an international one. When the domestic actors bargain with each other, the prevailed preference will become the state foreign policy towards other states (the low-left quadrant); when the domestic actors bargain with another international domestic actor, their respective preferences will be transmitted into the two states' preference scales (the lower-right quadrant). It is by this approach that the internal strategic bargaining process of “how these preferences were aggregated into policy” can be can be revealed.¹⁵⁰ “In this situation”, Milner elucidated furthermore,

¹⁴⁸ Milner 1998: 136-7.

¹⁴⁹ Milner 1998: 129.

¹⁵⁰ Milner 1998: 137.

“international politics and foreign policy are part of the domestic struggle for power over collective outcomes and the search for internal compromise”.¹⁵¹

For the Domestic Institutionalists, the formation of interest can be revealed by unpacking the state as an interest-maximizing association that contain sub-state interest-maximizing associations.

(iv) *Conclusion*

The Trajectory of Historical Development

Within the four languages of reason, utilitarian reason is the one that has generated the most influential and enduring movements within the discipline over the last six decades. Let me first provide a retrospect of its trajectory of development. The whole utilitarian movement in IR can be portrayed as a crystallizing process in which the conceptual space is expanded by applying to more objects.

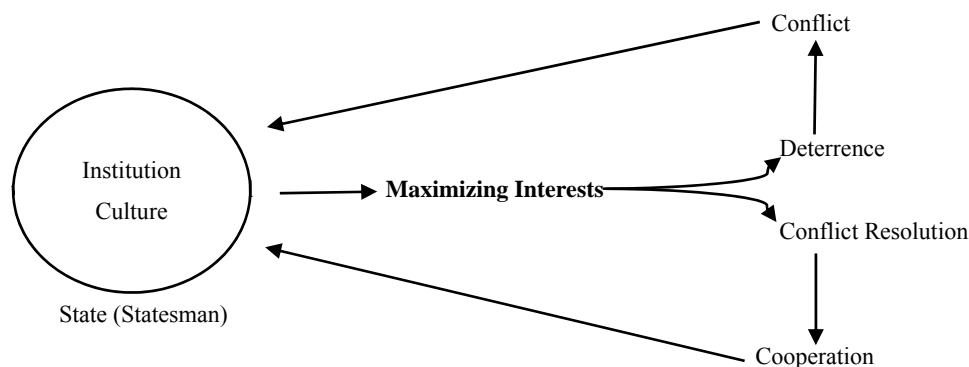


Fig. 2.18

Consider the figure (2.19) above. The concept of maximizing interest stands at the center. First, in the theories of deterrence and conflict resolution, the *explanandum* can be neither pure conflict nor pure cooperation (recall Aron’s “peace impossible, war improbable”). In the theories of deterrence devised by

¹⁵¹ Milner 1998: 134.

Schelling, Kahn and Snyder, the concept is used to show how an agent who maximizes interest can deter the opponent (who is also assumed as an interest maximizer) without an actual trial of strength (in other words, defense). In Schelling and Boulding's account of conflict resolution, the agent is expected to find a focal point or equilibrium, a point where both agents' interests are maximized (the maximum space is occupied) and where their expectations converge because they are interest-maximizers. Notice the particular condition of deterrence and conflict resolution: both agents are required to outwin the opponent without an actual use of violence, and to halt conflict before its escalation (if force is involved). This emphasis on the "mixed game" is imprinted by the dilemma during the early Cold War period.

Next the *explanandum* extends to pure conflict and cooperation by the Neo-Neo theorists. Gilpin and Mesquita's accounts of war in terms of "expected utility" go much further than deterrence theorists. War, even hegemonic war, is taken into account. In Keohane, Stein and Axelrod's theories of cooperation, the agents cease to be merely searching for the focal points. In Keohane's explanation of the maintenance of institutional cooperation, the agents demand institution to lower transaction cost and maximize absolute gains. Stein and Axelrod expound why institution origins and varies in types by envisaging that the agents want to maximize their interests in different games (also in various ways of play). It is noticeable, finally, that the decline of the American power vis-à-vis the Soviets as well as the Western allies in the 1970s generates strong apprehensions with the prospect of a return to greater conflict and the collapse of international institutions.

The last movement directs utilitarian rationality back to the agent itself. Whether morality conflict or institutional cooperation, their interests are shaped first of all by an endogenous condition. The *explanandum* is now the agent's own formation of interest. Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein explain how the interests maximized by the agent are shaped by identity, domestic culture, and norms. Milner and Moravcsik show that the agent, far from being a single

interest maximizer, is itself an interest-maximizer which comprises interest *maximizers* and which aggregates their interest into its own. Unlike the previous two movements, the utilitarian rationalists of a new generation face the growing challenges of constructivists, and, by implication, the requirement to engage more with disciplinary debate.

This is the trajectory of the changing *explanandum*: from non-pure conflict, non-pure cooperation, through pure conflict and extensive cooperation, to the agents' interest formation that can determine their conduct of pure conflicting or cooperative action.

The Voice of Utilitarian Reason: Its Defining Features

Within the development of the theories building on utilitarian rationality, the language of utilitarian reason – calculation of interest under constraints – has been pronounced in a slightly different way.

First, it is concerned with “advantage”, “utility”, “value”, “cost and benefit”, “self-seeking”, “egoists”, “self-interest”, or “preference”. However it may be uttered, the central content of utilitarian reason must be revolved around the maximization of interest, the procurement of benefits and avoidance of costs. Such a utilitarian language is in itself a special way to endow meaning on action that it verbalizes in a special form: whether making a strategic move, halting a conflict, creating an international institution, waging a war, or following the ideational road map, all these actions undertaken by the agent must be made sense of specifically through the presumption of the agent as maximizing interest.

Notice that some constructivists claim that utilitarian reason can be fundamentally distinguished from constructivists by the latter's distinct emphasis on culture and identity.¹⁵² The claim is partly unconvincing, since

¹⁵² See Wendt 1995, 1999, Checkel 1998, Hopf 1998, Ruggie 1998: Intro.

utilitarian reason can also embrace these “ideational” features, easily cashing them in as interest. What does differentiate the referent object from a Constructivist framework is not whether ideas and identities are taken into account but whether *in the last resort*, the agent’s action is explained in terms of *interest* maximization or culture.¹⁵³ Utilitarian reason, indeed, invites actors to an “enchanted world of interest” in which the pursuit of interest provides motivation, and the net balance between cost and benefit offers regulation.

Second, utilitarian reason is to undertake calculation under *constraints*. For the utilitarian theorists, constraints can be uncertainty, another actor, a different game, a different way of playing, or an institution or culture that may shape the form of preferences. Indeed, one may define constraints as anything that can disturb the ego’s own calculation.

The influences of “constraints” can be discussed for convenience under two conditions. The first is Game Theory, and the second Rational Choice. In the Game-Theoretical application of utilitarian reason, constraints take mainly two forms. One is the different games that the actors play. I have shown how Schelling, Kahn, Stein, Axelrod have applied such various games as Chicken (fig. 2.4), Focal Point (fig. 2.10), Prisoners’ Dilemma (fig. 2.12), and the Battle of Sexes (fig. 2.13). The actor’s maximization of interest becomes very different under these conditions. The other constraint, which has been rarely discussed, is the diverse ways of playing a given game. Consider the following table:

Choice	One-off	Iterated
Sequential	Schelling	Axelrod
Simultaneous	Stein	Milner

Fig. 2.19

Given a game, a different manner of playing can exert enormous influences on the actors’ calculations of interest. When agents are making sequential choices

¹⁵³ This is the reason why Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein’s figure implies a radical constructive explanation: the cultural factors can impact on foreign policy without using interest as its intervening variable.

in a one-by-one way (upper-left quadrant), the first can leave the burden to the second, manipulating and maneuvering the other's choice (recall Schelling and Kahn's illustration of deterrence). When both agents choose simultaneously (low-left), there will be few space for coercing and convincing the other unless some preparatory actions had already been taken beforehand. Furthermore, the agents' choices can also be impacted by the rounds of interaction: their choices would be dramatically different when they have only one interaction (namely making one choice of a once-for-all character), where few thoughts will be allotted for considering long-term gains, and when they are acting under the "shadow of the future", where the consequence of one interaction must be taken into account during the next.

In the Rational-Choice form, constraints can also take two forms. One form is the issue of uncertainty, or *expected* utility. This constraint is evident in Snyder's analysis of aggression, in Schelling's discussion of brinkmanship, in Boulding and Gilpin's account of conflict resolution and hegemonic war, and finally in Mesquita's explanation of war. By quantifying the certainty and uncertainty of the prospect of war – sometimes the law of marginal utility is also invoked – the thinkers of utilitarian rationality have endeavored to delineate the precise condition under which not a single utility can escape from being maximized. The other form is the constraint exerted on the formation of preferences. Moravcsik's two-step process and Milner's two-level games show how preference is conditioned by the internal aggregation of domestic preferences. The cultural influences on the preference formation have also been highlighted by Goldstein and Keohane, Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein, and by the many "cultural rationalists" I mentioned in Katzenstein's *The Culture of National Security*.

The diverse games, the different ways of playing the games, the uncertainty and culture and domestic institutions, all have delineated a specific condition under which the benefits of conduct are maximized. To envisage how to

maximize interest under these various conditions of calculation, the theorists of utilitarian reason can justly claim to have made a considerable contribution.

The Myth of the Rationalist Dominance

Is utilitarian reason giving rise to a monolithic tradition of “Rationalism” that knits together Thucydides, Morgenthau, Waltz and Keohane historically and unifies (Neo)Realism and (Neo)Liberalism theoretically? Keohane claimed so, but the assertion proves to be unwarranted. As I have shown, Keohane exploited the analytical similarity between the two languages of reason, and employed an interpretive strategy to read Morgenthau as a utilitarian rationalist. It is with reference to this tactic, namely the translation of other theories into a utilitarian tongue, that the dominance of Rationalism can be seen to have been fabricated.

The similarity between the two languages are remarkable. How, one may ask, to meticulously distinguish the two languages? Their differences are truly profound in the following aspects. First, whereas the Kantian language stands in opposition to emotion, the utilitarian one admits of the “rationality of irrationality”. For the thinkers of Kantian reason (think about Morgenthau’s “sentimentalism”), emotion is a manifestation of the failure of reason. But for the utilitarian theorists (consider Schelling and Kahn), emotional commitment can strengthen the maximization of interest, by behaving in a manner that is as if uncontrolled by reason.

Second, the notion of interest occupied such a preponderant position in the utilitarian accent that the moral dimension of conduct has been seriously overlooked. Even if Morgenthau, the most ardent advocate for defending “interest” by the discipline of reason, and who has long been mistaken as a utilitarian thinker, is conscious that the ethics of responsibility is intimately connected with the rational pursuit of interest.

Third, the two languages, despite sharing common concern with interest, point to different ways to maximize interest. Whereas the Kantians can at best

exercise control through ordinal calculation (Morgenthau's call for establishment of hierarchical objectives), the utilitarianists can accomplish this by ordinal calculation, by quantitative calculation that take payoffs, risks, strategies, and different kinds of constraints into account. At the level of the instrumental pursuit of interest, utilitarian reason is equipped with far advanced techniques than its Kantian counterpart. Conversely, for the thinkers of Kantian reason, there are also two ways to advance an agent's interest that the utilitarian rationalists fail to follow suit. One is to defend the agents' interest by starting from a contemplation of the end of political conduct. The other, which is more important, is that the utilitarianists have not developed an intersubjective way for maximizing interest. Rather than reaching mutual understanding and dialogic consensus, they have to be mute and try to outwin each other. The Kantians wanted the agents to cooperate by articulating voices and reach reasoned consensus (forging an intersubjective play of the game), yet the Utilitarianists wanted them to cooperate through independent decision making and forbid interpersonal (relative) comparison of utility. The de-emphasis of the transcendent reason that may link the agents intellectually and morally together may be seen as a typical feature of Utilitarian reason.

Notice a feature that may also distinguish the two. Whereas the thinkers of Kantian reason speak in an exhortative manner, the utilitarian rationalists are normally less aware of their presumptive tone. The Liberal Institutionalists know that men *are* irrational but they exhort to transform the human nature. Morgenthau acknowledges that reason cannot determine power but urges for its rational use. Linklater understands that unjust exclusion *are* within and without the communities and plea for dialogic interrogation. The utilitarianists are the very opposite. An opponent would be deterred if he *was* indeed as rational as Schelling, Kahn and Snyder anticipated. A state and its opponent would have found the common boundary of conflict if both *were* interest-maximizers, as Schelling and Boulding described. A state would initiate a war and stop somewhere if it *was* acting in accordance with the law of marginal

utility. States will create international institutions if they *were* rational to the extent that making complex calculations (such as reversing the Coase theorem) to lower the transaction costs.

The Games that States Play

Utilitarian reason pronounces an enchanted world of calculating interest, indicating that all actors are interest maximizers under constraints. But what if the actors fail to comply with this requirement? Have the actors internalized utilitarian rationality to such an extent that without any external pressures they can still behave in this way? What if they are unwilling to cash culture and value into interest, seeing instead that the calculation of interest *per se* is determined by culture? In his response to Keohane's misconstrued claim that utilitarian rationality plays a crucial role in *Theory* for discovering the systematic effects, Waltz argues that "I do not differ with him over rationality, except semantically" – what is this rationality assumption that is central to *Theory* but whose "sematic" meaning is different from Keohane's?

Chapter III. Axiological Reason

In this chapter I shall turn to the third language of axiological rationality. Axiological rationality, which has also been renowned as “the logic of appropriateness” or “contextual-institutional rationality”, defines rational action as following exterior rules, norms, and cultures.¹ It is concerned with “trying to do the right thing” within various contexts, of which cultures, values, and identities are an indispensable part.² Here, three points deserve clarification.

First, axiological rationality is characteristically relational. Unlike its utilitarian counterpart that ascribes rationality to the individual agent's action, axiological rationality conceptualizes rationality as an interrelation between the agent and the external frame of reference. Rationality is always measured by the extent to which the agent can keep up with the external rule.

Second, although many axiological-rational thinkers refuse to consider the “external” rules, norms, and cultures as ontologically independent of the agents,³ they still draw a sharp conceptual distinction between the agents who act on the rules exogenous to them, and the rules which are “systematic”, “social”, “intersubjective”, and irreducible to any internally individual property. As I shall show, all the thinkers of axiological rationality have argued strongly against a view that reduces rationality to the level of the individual agent.

Third, axiological rationality does not suppose that all actions are essentially “determined” by these exterior frames of reference. On the contrary, many

¹ Although its essential principle has been employed by IR scholars for a long time, the very term “logic of appropriateness” has only a recent history: it was first introduced by March & Olson (1998: 311-2), celebrated by Risse's (2000: 3-7) tripartite comparison between it and the logics of consequence and arguing, and systematically criticized under the name of “the contextual-institutional or normative rationality” by Sending (2002: 450). For IR scholars, Brian Barry's *Sociologists, Economists, and Democracy* (1970) has been well referred as a landmark comparison between the logics of consequentialism and appropriateness before the 1990s, while Martin Hollis' *Philosophy of Social Sciences* (1996) seems to have replaced Barry's and become a new classic. Outside the IR circle, the “logic of appropriateness” is first outlined in March & Olson's *Rediscovering Institutions* (1989), whereas the “logic of consequence” appears to be untraceable but can be dated back to the coinage of “Consequentialism” by G.E.M. Anscombe in her essay “Modern Moral Philosophy” (1959).

² Fierke 2007: 170.

³ Onuf's (1989: 114) “Constructivism” is a theory of rules that proposes to “overcome the dualism of self and world by denying priority to either”.

axiological-rational thinkers acknowledge the elasticity of social action (as the verb “*trying* to do the right thing” indicates). External rules shape and shove, push and pull. They rarely determine the agents’ action in a decisive way without going through a process of coercing, inducing, exhorting and aiding the agent to act on themselves. Indeed, as we shall see throughout the chapter, one of the most distinct feature of axiological-rational thinking is precisely the issue of why and how to ensure the agents can be axiological rational.

Notice that when the thinkers of axiological rationality speak, they always articulate their voices in an explanatory tone. Unlike the Kantian and utilitarian rational theorists, the axiological-rational theorists are keen to demonstrate how the concept can be used to provide cogently theoretical explanation of political conduct. Even if they engage with history, they still tackle historical problems in a manner that is less interested in looking at history for its own sake, than in using history to show how the concept can provide more explanatory power.

In what follows I show that four IR thinkers conceive of reason in a manner of axiological rationality. The first thinker I want to examine is Kenneth Waltz and his *Theory of International Politics* (1979, hereafter *Theory*). Indeed, Waltz’s opus is of such a singular importance that it has given rise to numerous debates, both over whether he is “rationalist” but also over the kind of rationality that he is aligned with.

First, there has been a heated debate between Waltz and his critics over whether the assumption of rationality is prerequisite for the former’s *Theory*. Waltz, for his part, denied the indispensability of such a concept; even if it is crucial, declared Waltz, the rationality will be very different from the one employed by Keohane in a “semantic” sense. The critics – who included Rationalists such as Keohane, Realists such as Mearsheimer, Postmodernists such as Ashley and Constructivists such as Wendt – conversely maintained that not only is *Theory* (particularly of the balance of power) built on the concept of utilitarian rationality but that it simultaneously established a classic demonstration of how utilitarian rationality can be exploited. At least “*in effect*,

and crucially in terms of the *influence* of his work”, in the words of a leading British IR theorist, Waltz has offered a “‘rational choice’ version” of Realist account of international politics.⁴ This controversy leads to a number of questions: are the critics’ insistent assertions of the significance of utilitarian rationality (in relation to *Theory*) copious or justified? Is *Theory* a masterpiece that falls into a tradition linking Thucydides with Morgenthau, Waltz and Keohane himself? What is the rationality in Waltz’s distinctive “semantic” meaning?

Second, in contrast to the first utilitarian-rational reading, there is a rival interpretation which contends that the concept of rationality *is* crucial for Waltz, although it is important to note that the meaning of the term substantially diverges from the utilitarian conception. Knutsen, for instance, argues that *Theory* displays a “concept of systems rationality” in which the system “has its own rationality” and “the rationality of the system is not a function of the rationality of its members”.⁵ Within recent years this systematic/sociological rational reading has gained increasing attention and acknowledgement. “Waltz highlights a positivistic epistemology of picture”, Fierke argued, “against the background of an implicit social ontology”.⁶ Goddard and Nexon point out that “structural realism is a far richer sociological theory of international politics than its critics and defenders usually recognize”.⁷ “If Waltz had declared himself a thoroughgoing constructivist”, Onuf remarked after reexamining Waltz’s account of structure, “other scholars might have followed suit”.⁸ All these rediscoveries of Waltz as a systematic or sociological rational theorist point to an implicitly axiological conception of rationality which can be clearly distinguished from a conventional stance which construes Waltz as a Rational Choice theorist.

⁴ Brown 2000: 47-8, emphasis added.

⁵ Knutsen 1997: 248-9.

⁶ Fierke 2002: 340.

⁷ Goddard & Nexon 2005: 10.

⁸ Onuf 2009: 196.

Why and where should I position myself within these controversies? First, I want to unravel the riddle of why Waltz has consistently denied the significance of the term imputed to him by such critics as Keohane. Second, I also want to show what the differently semantic meaning would be given to the term if Waltz was compelled to accept its indispensability. The two riddles have generated considerable controversy and contestation. Yet Waltz's position nonetheless remains opaque and uncertain.

My engagement with the two preceding riddles will proceed in three steps. In the initial instance, I provide a brief examination of Waltz's *Man, the State and War* (1959) and of his writings on the nuclear problems (during the 1980s). I show that in Waltz's *own* vocabulary, the concept of rationality, considerably shaped by the Realist discourse of the 1950s and the Rational Deterrence Theories of the 1960s,⁹ is defined as man's capacity for controlling passions and conducting interest calculation. Far from embracing this conception of reason as his inspiration, Waltz rather takes it as foil, seeing it as an essential trait of the "reductionist" theories, a very taboo term from which he wants to distance himself (and which he consequently engages with extreme scruple in *Theory*). This explains why his critics' ascription of rationality to him caused Waltz considerable consternation. In a further step, I briefly contextualize Waltz's *Theory* by reconstituting the system theories that preceded Waltz – with specific attention to contributions from Morton Kaplan, Raymond Aron, Stanley Hoffmann and Charles McClelland – and then I reinterpret his *Theory* within this intellectual context. This contextual reading subsequently reveals that although Waltz apparently spoke in the language of microeconomics, he in fact uttered a sociological language of game, rule, order, and imperative in order to demonstrate how the units are required to be axiological-rational by the international system. This presents an image of "systematic rationality" or "social ontology" which closely resembles the work of later axiological-rational

⁹ Notice "considerably": Waltz did sometimes speak of the rationality of firms rather than of decision maker in *Theory*. Nevertheless, the dominant conception in his thought remains at the man level. See more details below.

scholars such as Onuf, Kratochwil, and Fierke. Finally, I reconstitute the process through which Waltz's axiological-rational theory had been incrementally "utilitarianized". By retracing the process through which Waltz's conceptions of "system" and "anarchy" were misappropriated by both the Keohanean Rationalists and Ashlyian Reflectivists (in a manner which clearly diverged from Waltz's own interpretation and usage), I demonstrate how Waltz was gradually reconceived as a utilitarian theorist.

Waltz's *Theory* is an exemplar of axiological rationality. Yet too few scholars have recognized his axiological-rational insight and all too many have arrived at the belief that Waltz is a utilitarian theorist *per excellence*. Onuf and especially Kratochwil's accounts of rationality, to which I shall turn in the second section, fall into this trap. As two leading "Constructivist" thinkers, Onuf and Kratochwil have long been renowned for their pursuit of an alternative conception other than the predominantly utilitarian one – the latter is even renowned for his critique of Waltz who is construed by Kratochwil as a typical utilitarian-rational theorist. What has not been recognized, however, is the remarkable resemblances as well as differences between Onuf and Kratochwil's ideas of rationality and Waltz's.

By concentrating on Onuf and Kratochwil's defining works from the early 1980s to early 1990s – the former's *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (1989) and the latter's *Rules, Norms and Decisions* (1989) and several manifesto articles – I shall proceed in three steps and in the latter two display my arguments. In the first, I briefly reconstitute their dualistic critique of the a-contextual pathology of utilitarian rationality and the restrictedness of consequentialist logic rooted in Rational Choice and Game Theory. Then I shall show how Onuf and Kratochwil had taken these critiques as a foil for exposing an alternative definition of rationality which is preconditioned, anteceded and bounded by rules. It is in this conceptualization of rationality as embedded within a much broad rule-constituted and regulated game (or rules-bounded world politics) that the resemblance between Waltz's

and Onuf and Kratochwil's idea of rationality reaches the climax: Kratochwil's game and Onuf's rules are essentially parallels of Waltz's system to the extent that all consider the actors' strategies to be conditioned constitutively and regulatively by external rules/principles. In the third step, having disclosed the similarity between their conceptions, I shall go on to delineate an extra, intersubjective, dimension of Onuf and especially Kratochwil's notions of axiological rationality: they argue that rule-following can be intersubjectively contested and enforced. In concluding the section I suggest however that if viewed from a broader perspective, Onuf and Kratochwil's intersubjective mechanism of rule-following ultimately complements, rather than competes with, Waltz's own understanding.

In the third section I turn to K.M. Fierke's outstanding analysis of axiological rationality, which is evidenced in *Changing Games and Changing Strategies* (1999), *Diplomatic Interventions* (2005), and several significant articles.¹⁰ Although she is widely recognized as a leading Constructivist thinker, Fierke's axiological conceptualization of rationality, which possess a greater degree of dynamism than other axiological-rational thinkers such as Onuf and Kratochwil, remains underappreciated. I want to demonstrate, first, that like other theorists of axiological rationality, Fierke also develops an exemplary conception of rationality that is defined by following external rules. Second, and more crucially, I show how Fierke's conception of axiological rationality is dynamic. To follow/enforce a rule is, for Fierke, not merely to axiologically rationally reproduce a game. Rather, because a rule can be shared by multiple games, the actors, in following a certain rule (being axiological rational in relation to a rule), may transform the present game into a new one – hence the state of being axiological rational can transition from one game to another. For Fierke, this requires consideration of the axiological “rationality of moving towards a new game”.¹¹ I shall proceed in three steps. First, I locate Fierke's idea of

¹⁰ Fierke 1998, 2005.

¹¹ Fierke 1998: 130.

rationality vis-à-vis other Constructivists who argue that rationality can be an externalization of internal values. Secondly, I demonstrate how Fierke has constructed her theory of axiological rationality on Wittgenstein's language game. I show the similarity and difference between Fierke's and Kratochwil's location of rationality within language game. Finally, I expound Fierke's account of how rationality, while being axiological, can be dynamic and generate transition to different games.

One clarification is required before proceeding. In the ensuing discussion Alexander Wendt's name will sometimes occur, but his such influential works as *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999) will not receive an extensive engagement. Indeed, Wendt has presented an implicit theory of axiological rationality without explicitly invoking the term – state action is construed to be both constituted and generated by the three international “cultures” (Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian).¹² However, it is precisely because Wendt *himself* has never enunciated the concept in axiological-rational terms, that enormous violence may be done to his thought if it is interpreted in such a light.

(i) Kenneth Waltz, Rationality and the Theory of International Politics

In order to understand the axiological-rational basis of *Theory*, it is necessary to grasp the two interconnected components of Waltz's enterprise: the pursuit of a system *theory* and a *system* theory. For Waltz, the two are inseparable.¹³ Theory begins by conceptualizing a distinct domain, and the concept of international system is deployed to characterize its (international politics) essence. Theory explains regularity within a particular realm, and system points to such similarity and repetition in conduct. Theory omits disturbances from

¹² Wendt 1999.

¹³ Waltz 1979: 79.

other domains, and system counterbalances personal and cultural deviations.¹⁴ Hence for Waltz, *both* theory and system have to be closed in order to render a pattern of regular conduct recognizable. Their unification as a *system theory* is thus applicable to, but remains distinct from, a bounded terrain in reality. To either consider Waltz's *Theory* as a theory independent of its system content, or to regard it as merely a theory of system (as if Waltz was not concerned with how a proper theory should be), are both utterly erroneous.¹⁵ In what follows, I shall concentrate on the systematic aspect of *Theory* without focusing too much on the theoretical dimension.

Waltz and Reductionist Theories

Throughout his life, Waltz did not speak very much of the term except on two occasions – both before and after *Theory*. Both examples show that the concept of rationality, far from inspiring Waltz, conversely played an extraordinarily negative role in shaping his thinking (and construction of *Theory*).

The first occasion when this is demonstrated is in *Man, the State and War* (1959). Influenced by his contemporaries, especially Hans Morgenthau and John Herz, Waltz discerned the tendency for *both* Realists and Liberalists to identify the cause of war as lying within human (ir)rationality. Kennan's comment on the irrationality of human nature, Morgenthau's denunciation of "Rationalism", Herz's idealism as concentrating on rational solution, were pervasive elements within Waltz's discussion. Liberals, on the other hand, expect that the triumph of human reason will eradicate the cause of war. Spinoza regards "reason [... as] accurately interpreting the true interest of each would lead all people to live harmoniously in society".¹⁶ Kant considers that the

¹⁴ Many of Waltz's intellectual mentors – such as Morgenthau (1959) and Aron (1967), and behind both, Kant – define theory as using a concept to order the infinitely empirical manifolds of reality. See Waltz (1979: 5-7, 1990: 7-8).

¹⁵ Many IR scholars have examined Waltz's "Theory of Theory" from a formal point of view, without realizing the crucial, constitute, role played by the concept of "system" as substance in his construction of such a theory, see e.g. Kratochwil 1984b: 313-5, Waever 2009.

¹⁶ Waltz 1959a: 22-6, at 23.

triumph of man's noumenal being (reason) over his phenomenal existence (passions and impulses) and the public use of human reason will make war obsolete, substituted by the international moral law, hinted Waltz in *Man*.¹⁷ "Nineteenth-century liberals [Cobden] had thought it comparatively easy to substitute reason for force"; even Hobson the socialist, continued Waltz, adopts their program but with a modification that "reason will instead be the means by which the relations of states are adjusted to the mutual advantage of all of them".¹⁸ Even within policy circles, cautioned Waltz, this idea of reason had never died out in the minds of statesmen. In his review of Philip Noel-Baker, the outstanding campaigner for nuclear disarmament and ministers of several departments for the Labor cabinet, Waltz declared that the former's proposal, "by the application of man's power of reason" to guarantee peace, demonstrates "his confidence of reason and will" but commits the error of overlooking fear and distrust among states while assuming that "reason dictates disarmament".¹⁹

The second occasion is demonstrated within Waltz's writings on nuclear weapons. Having completed *Theory*, Waltz soon turned to the problems of nuclear deterrence and proliferation, a topic that was forcefully contested around the same time as that *Theory* was written. Although Waltz's engagement with deterrence theories lagged far behind many of his contemporaries – Morgenthau and Aron had kept abreast of the development of deterrence theories and responded to Kahn and Morgenstern over the course of the 1960s – Waltz soon caught up by reproducing his critique of the explanations with specific reference to the internal properties of the rational decision maker. Having undertaken a close reading of the works of Brodie, Kahn, Schelling, and Snyder, Waltz argued that Deterrence theories, which

¹⁷ Waltz 2008: vii. This theme was subsequently elaborated in "Kant, Liberalism, and War" (1962), an essay based on the cut-down materials on Kant for Waltz's doctoral dissertation.

¹⁸ Waltz 1959a: 152-4, also, 120,

¹⁹ Waltz 1959b: 254-55.

were necessarily constructed on the “slippery notion of rationality”,²⁰ misconstrued the logic of nuclear weapons. As his 1986 reply to Keohane underlining the impossibility that decision-makers would always act in accordance with precise and exact calculations, Waltz instead declared that it was rather nuclear weapons that enabled leaders to scrupulously make their own moves:

“Nuclear weapons are different; they dominate strategies. [...] Indeed, in an important sense, nuclear weapons eliminate strategy. If one thinks of strategies as being designed for defending national objectives or for gaining them by military force and as implying a choice about how major wars will be fought, nuclear weapons make strategy obsolete.”²¹

In both cases Waltz uses the term with worrying caution. Three factors explain this emphasis. First, the subject of rationality is always considered by Waltz as a human, whether as a man or decision maker. This feature is clearly evidenced in his writings from both the 1950s and 1980s. Second, for Waltz, to choose an internal quality as independent variable will lead to endless questions rather than a definite answer. If the overthrow of human reason brought war and its restoration peace, then how much rationality will ensure the eradication of conflict and discord? And how “rational” must the decision maker be in order to refrain from the use of nuclear weapons? In fact, not only such an internal quality of man (as rational and good) but also those of states (as socialist, democratic or revolutionary) will require the same interrogation.²² Theoretical accounts which conceive of a deficiency in an internal quality ultimately result in “regression” or immunity from falsification, which renders the very meaningfulness of enquiry at such a level suspect. Third, in addition to the

²⁰ Waltz 1983: 269.

²¹ Waltz 1990: 285.

²² In addition to Waltz 1979: 62ff, see his critique of the “thesis” of democratic peace, Waltz 2000: 198-203.

properties of man, there is always something external and circumstantial that can constrain, intermediate and subdue human action. Human reason can take effect only under broadly anarchical ground.²³ If these reductionist theories²⁴—explanations of transgressive character that intrude on a different level – are insufficient in invoking the internal attributes, then the remedy has to be obtained by looking at “external” explanations that were outside but which simultaneously encompassed the agents themselves. This was what he later identified as the “international system”.

Waltz and System Theorizations

Waltz’s pursuit of a system theory of international politics, implying an axiological conception of rationality, was built on a comprehensive critique of many preceding endeavors from 1957 to 1967.²⁵ Although those system theories are too complex to be reviewed here – another immanent historiography is in demand elsewhere – it would be sufficient to notice the following aspects.

First, Waltz defined “system” not as an intellectual construct but as a real existence. In Waltz’s view, the term had been used to such a pervasive, and indeed perplexing, extent that few had ascertained what it really was. Was it synonymous with a comprehensive analysis of a field, or a real thing that had attributes, compositions, functions and different historical-morphological existences; or perhaps a combination of both? In his *System and Process in International Politics* (1957), the first monograph bearing the title in the field, Morton Kaplan analyzed six international systems where four of them did *not*

²³ Waltz 1959a: 236-7.

²⁴ Waltz’s category of “reductionist” demands extreme scruple, as later IR thinkers erroneously equated Waltz’s “reductionist” with “individualistic” or “atomistic” (Buzan 1995: 199-200). Waltz’s “reductionist” is not only vertically but also horizontally and spherically defined. Thus an economic explanation of international political action, or the unit-level account of international occurrence, are all transgressive explanations. See Waltz 1979: esp. 36-8.

²⁵ Two excellent surveys, see Goodman 1965, and Hobden 1998: esp. 39-47.

exist in history.²⁶ In 1960, Kenneth Thompson claimed that Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations* provides a first "system" analysis of international politics while within the same year Ada Bozeman equated international system with *Politics and Culture in International History* (1960).²⁷ In 1966, when Stanley Hoffmann defined system, he even considered it as "at the same a 'given', a challenge, and a mystery" where the units' decisions "resemble a shot in the dark, more than a keeping of accounts".²⁸

For Waltz, the abuse of the term evidenced the system theories in disarray: system should neither be simply equated with a comprehensive analysis, nor viewed as a mere parameter of conduct. Rather, it had to be ontologically real, "productive rather than be a product".²⁹ In order to emphasize that the system could really act as a compelling logic of action, molding and selecting the agents' conduct, Waltz even endeavored to speak of a language of Physics to enable him to distinguish himself from others. "A political structure", Waltz stated boldly, "is akin to a field of forces in physics".³⁰ "System theories, whether political or economic," he explained, "are theories that explain how the organization of a realm acts as a constraining and disposing force on the interacting units within it. Such theories tell us about the forces the units are subject to".³¹ Although speaking in a language of physics, of "force" and "mechanism", Waltz *actually* verbalized his thoughts in another language of "rule" and "games", as I shall subsequently show.

Second, Waltz argues that the productiveness of system can become recognizable only in isolation from unit level *and* from its historical-sociological contingency. It is only by insulating the systematic causes from the "internal characteristics", "internal dispositions", "internally generated aims", "internal compositions", "internal conditions", "internal processes", that the very reverse

²⁶ Kaplan 1957: 21, 7, Ch.9.

²⁷ Thompson (1960: 34) dated even back further: "If *Scientific Man* provided a blueprint for the building of a systematic theory of world politics, then *Politics among Nations* gave us the completed edifice." Bozeman 1960.

²⁸ Hoffmann 1965b: 266.

²⁹ Waltz 1979: 50.

³⁰ Waltz 1979: 73.

³¹ Waltz 1979: 72, also 69.

of these “inside-out explanations” becomes possible.³² Unlike most of his contemporaries who regarded both the international system and the national system (sometimes called “subsystem”) as operating simultaneously at two vertical levels and thereby jointly determining outcomes, Waltz insisted that it was necessary to focus on systematic effects and pack the national subsystem into mere units (or “like units”).³³ Arguing against Morton Kaplan and Raymond Aron,³⁴ Waltz announced that what needed to be investigated was how the units responded to external influences. With the collapse of the national subsystem into units, the differences between *puissance* and *pouvoir* were eliminated.³⁵ Again, unlike most of his contemporaries (with the exception of Charles A. McClelland), Waltz proposed that the transformation of capability into power was not constrained by internal structure at all – since the subsystem was condensed into a unit – but was instead heavily constricted by external structures such as the conditions of bipolarity or multipolarity.³⁶ To use the language of Milner, the states in Waltz’s *Theory* only play an external game towards each other, thus indirectly emphasizing that the internal domestic game has no influence on the transformation of capability into power. Or, as J.M. Hobson pointed out, Waltz’s states, although possessing high “domestic

³² Waltz 1979: 60-5, *passim*.

³³ Waltz was unclear about whether his division is conceptual or ontological. Sometimes he stressed the significance to recognize that “different national and international systems coexist and interact” or “unit-level and structural causes interact”, which rendered his radical statement in *Theory* seemingly inconsistent. See further Waltz 1979: 38, 1986: 54, 1990: 78.

³⁴ Kaplan, despite distinguishing the problem of “macrosystem structure” from “microstructural problems of foreign policy”, failed to keep up with this distinction and sometimes allowed the subsystem (national) to dominate the international ones. Aron, attributing the use of force to the characteristic of internal regimes, committed the similar error as Kaplan and “drift to the ‘subsystem dominate pole.’” See Waltz 1979: 54, 62, 72; cf. Kaplan 1966: 51, Aron 1967: 191.

³⁵ Aron 1966: 48ff, *puissance* (power of the state), *pouvoir* (power within the state). Most scholars then, like Aron, drew a sharp distinction between capability and power – capability is the possession of tangible resources whereas power is relational, a product of conversion of capability through mobilization and transformation. For them, the mobilization of capability into power is intermediated by the internal (as well as the external) political relation. Waltz, by packing states into units, equates power with the internal capability.

³⁶ Consider Rosenau’s words: “For years, I have solved this conceptual problem by dropping the word ‘power’ from my analytic vocabulary (thus the use here of quotation marks) replacing it with the concept of capabilities whenever reference is made to attributes or resources possessed and with verbs such as control or influence whenever the relational dimension of ‘power’ is subjected to analysis” (quoted from Onuf 1989: 238, fn.15). Waltz, however, made the distinction but did not stick so rigorously to it, see e.g. Waltz 1979: 98, 185. McClelland (1966:73), in his *Theory and International System* (1966), made the classic expression that power is “a performance trait of international relations”, or “power is to be interpreted as a property of the international system”. For McClelland, power was comparable to the eventually generated horsepower by an engine when running under the condition of fuel, air, and combustion, which formed a system.

agential power”, had only limited “international agential power” towards each other.³⁷

Third, Waltz’s enthusiastic pursuit of an external explanation over an internal one resulted in his radical rejection of historically open systems. To this extent, the presentation of states as mere units exhibits a system-dominant picture in which the system orientated states’ actions. The agents were concerned less with themselves than with the maintenance of their position within a system which had to *be* in the first place. Waltz’s system was “homeostatic” rather than “homeorhesis”.³⁸ It is on this account that the historical canvass, with its associated preoccupation with the question of “how changes in these components make for changes in the international system”, exemplified in Richard Rosecrance’s *Action and Reaction in World Politics* (1962) was dismissed by Waltz as answers to “how good is the historical writing?”³⁹ In this context, consider the following statement from Hoffmann’s *Contemporary Theory in International Relations* (1960):

“We must include in our research the international relations of non-Western civilizations, and world politics of periods other than those of the city-states or nation-state. The relations between Empires, the complex hierarchies within Empires, the relations between Empires and peoples at their borders, are worth a study. [...] the study of international relations is a study of change; forces of change cannot be treated as external or deviants: they are fundamental, and internal; furthermore, the lack of a supreme straitjacket comparable to the state in domestic politics turns world affairs into the pure dynamics of ‘open’ systems.”⁴⁰

³⁷ J.M. Hobson 2000: 19-30.

³⁸ Hass 1981: 30.

³⁹ Waltz 1979: 43.

⁴⁰ Hoffmann 1960: 76.

This open historical system has to be superseded, rebutted Waltz, by the proposition that “there is one, and only one, international system [which] govern[s] the political units, be they city states, empires, or nations”.⁴¹ The system is conceived as a texture of political action that has not changed over the last two millennia. A system theory is possible only if the system is closed and homeostatic; it is only as a consequence of this feature that patterns of conduct become discernible.

System and Structure in Theory (Part I): Axiological Rationality

In *Theory* Waltz presented an image of axiological rationality in three ways, each of which corresponded to his tripartite definition of structure. The first corresponded to his general definition, and the other two to more operationally orientated definitions.

In its general definition, a structure designated “a set of constraining conditions [that act] as a selector”. Rather than being a purely analytical construct, this form evidences strongly ontological implications. Its operation, even if under the condition that “the efforts and aims of agents and agencies vary”, could “limit and mold agents and agencies and point them in ways that tend toward a common quality of outcomes”. Indeed, Waltz sometimes attempted a language of physics to account for this molding effects, an action which seemed to suggest that the agents were acting in response to an external “force”. Yet this language soon gave way to one more closely attuned to sociological themes. Structure molded and limited, “through socialization of the actors and through competition among them”.⁴² In its socialization dimension, structures, functioning in a manner like that of societies, brought “member of a group into conformity with its norms” and “establish norms and encourage

⁴¹ Waltz 1979: 91.

⁴² Waltz 1979: 73-4, see also Sorensen 2008: 7-9.

conformity”.⁴³ Selection was the other side of the socialization coin. It functioned by “rewarding some behaviors and punishing others”, ruling out unsuccessful competitors and rewarding the successful ones in accordance with their conformity to such norms. For Waltz, it was important to recognize that “so far as selection *rules*”, the actors’ action will be selected “according to consequences rules [sic]”.⁴⁴

When the structure rules by socialization and selection, no special requirement is imposed on the assumption of individual actor’s rationality. Thus the selective function of structure is analogous to a market that makes *no* demand on agents’ profit maximizing rationality:

“Firms are assumed to be maximizing units. In practice, some of them may not even be trying to maximize anything. Others may be trying, but their ineptitude may take this hard to discern. Competitive systems are regulated, so to speak, by the ‘rationality’ of the more successful competitors. What does rationality mean? It means only that some do better than others – whether through intelligence, skill, hard work, or dumb luck. [...] Those who survive share certain characteristics. Those who go bankrupt lack them. Competition spurs the actors to accommodate their ways to the socially most acceptable and successful practices.”⁴⁵

For Waltz, the most successful actors in the market were not necessarily those which maximized interests. Rather, it was those that shared the attributes of “the socially most acceptable” practices that were subsequently “spurred” by the market. Competition thus worked like a directive or even inductive rule that molded agents’ action, directed them towards conformity and “spurred” them to follow the most successful practice. The source of success was not derived

⁴³ Waltz 1979: 75-6.

⁴⁴ Waltz 1979: 74-7, emphasis added.

⁴⁵ Waltz 1979: 76-7.

from an internal attribute of the actors themselves, but from an external rule that preemptively designated what the attribute would be. The directive rule posed no demand on the utilitarian-rational assumption of the actors (i.e. rationality as an attribute of firms to maximize their interest) and could thus be viewed as independent of their very intents. Whether the actors were trying to maximize interest *or not* – indeed “some of them may not even be trying to maximize anything at all” – their action would be sanctioned and conducted in accordance with the “socially most acceptable and successful practices”.

In presenting a general definition of structure Waltz implicitly anticipated a picture of rule-governed and externally derived rationality. This point was further clarified by the manner in which he explicitly defined structure as an “anarchical” organizing principle”.⁴⁶ The rule of nobody, Waltz argued, was not tantamount to no rule: anarchy, in its formal form, was an “order without an orderer”; accordingly it was conceived as the “ordering principle” or “organization of realms” in the singular, and “modes of organization” in the collective.⁴⁷ How did, however, this anarchical principle organize international politics?

Waltz’s answer was that, functioning like a positivist legal rule,⁴⁸ the anarchical ordering principle would “reward or punish behavior that conforms more or less nearly to what is required of one who wishes to succeed in the system”:

“Actors may perceive the structure that constrains them and understand how it serves to reward some kinds of behavior and to penalize others. But then again they either may not see it or, seeing it, may...fail to conform their actions to the pattern that are most often rewarded and least often punished. To say that ‘the structure selects’ means simply that those who

⁴⁶ History proves, however, that his choice of the term, causing endless confusions and misunderstandings, has eventually complicated the issue. See more in the next section.

⁴⁷ Waltz 1979: 88-9, 98, 103. Waltz (1979: 115 footnote, 1998: 384) acknowledged that Durkheim provided “the best explication of the two ordering principles”, and it is a “real insight”.

⁴⁸ Martin Wight (1961: 92-3) is the earliest to draw such a connection (or analogy) between “Realism” and Legal Positivism. Bull (1962) explores further. As an admiring reader of both Wight and Bull, Waltz himself would understand this analogy very well.

conform to accepted and successful practices more often rise to the top and are likely to stay there. The game one has to win is defined by the structure that determines the kind of player who is likely to prosper”.⁴⁹

Instead of adhering to his previous use of a language of physics (and accordingly speaking of the force of the universe), Waltz conversely adopted a form of language which adhered to the rules of a game. The structure of a game could designate “accepted and successful practices” and the distinctive features of a prosperous player. Ordering principles rewarded the action conforming to their requirement and punished the ones defying their direction. Furthermore, Waltz added, the rules had counterfactual validity even if they had been defied by the actors: whether the agents followed the rule or not – or even they defied the rules they had already recognized – these rules were still binding in effect.

What the anarchical ordering principle required in content was both tangible and transhistorical. This anarchical order without an order was neither an incidental status “identified with chaos, destruction, and death”,⁵⁰ nor, as Aron, Hoffmann and Rosecrance conversely argued, a historically specific status that was superseded by empire and moderated by the Concert of Europe. Rather, it was itself an “imperative” that had prevailed since the formation of the realm. “The domestic imperative is ‘specialize!’”, and the “international imperative is ‘take care of yourself!’”. Under the direct influence of anarchical organizing principles, each unit was required “to put itself in a position to be able to take care of itself” and “to maintain or improve their positions by maneuvering, by bargaining, or by fighting”. The reward would be “the maintenance of their autonomy”. The punishment brought by non-conformity was that they “will fail to prosper, will lay themselves open to dangers, will suffer”.⁵¹ For Waltz, this

⁴⁹ Waltz 1979: 92, emphasis added.

⁵⁰ Waltz 1979: 103.

⁵¹ Waltz 1979: 106-7, 113, 118.

imperative was trans-historically applicable to all “the primary units of an era, be they city states, empires, or nations”. “Over the centuries states have changed in many ways”, Waltz argued, “but the quality of international life has remained much the same”.⁵² Ruled by such a principle, the units’ autonomy and prosperity would correspond to the degree to which they follow the lead. “Notice”, Waltz nevertheless cautioned:

“that the theory requires no assumptions of rationality or of constancy of will on the part of all of the actors. The theory says simply that if some do relatively well, others will emulate them or fall by the wayside. [...] Nor need it be assumed that all of the competing states are striving relentlessly to increase their power. The possibility that force may be used by some states to weaken or destroy others does, however, make it difficult for them to break out of the competitive system”.⁵³

The theory required no assumption of rationality on the part of the actors, since socialization would make them emulate others. But did it not demand an alternative conception of rationality as following the rule? Waltz’s reply was twofold. First, if rule meant following the assumption of “a necessary correspondence of motive and result”, inferring “rules for the actors from the observed result of their action”, then no such rule-following rationality is needed. In that case, it would be fallacious to conclude that in an intensively competitive market the profit of firms would be driven to zero because they followed the rule of minimizing benefits. Similarly, it would be similarly erroneous to announce that states engage in power struggle because it is a rule for them to do so.⁵⁴ On too many occasions, “rules” inferred from the result of interaction had been mistakenly “prescribed to the actors”.⁵⁵ For Waltz, there was a fundamental

⁵² Waltz 1979: 91, 110.

⁵³ Waltz 1979: 118.

⁵⁴ Waltz 1979: 120.

⁵⁵ Waltz 1979: 120.

distinction between the “power-political game played because of international-political imperative”, and the game which arose simply because “states are power-minded”.⁵⁶

Second, if rationality means following the rule designated by the system outside the actors, then such a definition is indeed required. To this extent, it is the external rule that intermediates the internal motive and decides the final outcome:

“In anarchy, security is the highest end. [...] Because power is a means and not an end, states prefer to join the weaker of two coalitions. They cannot let power, a possibly useful means, become the end they pursue. *The goal the system encourages them to seek* is security. Increased power may or may not serve that end. [...] The first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system. States can seldom afford to make maximizing power their goal. International politics is too serious a business for that.”⁵⁷

The states, when pursuing power and playing the power-political game, are not acting in accordance with their own calculations of power. Rather, this is an imperative legislated by the anarchical ordering principle – the requirement to use power to take care of yourself. It is a goal encouraged by the system, and the maximization of power might endanger this objective. This, for Waltz, presented a picture “of how the placement of states affects their behavior and even colors their characters”: it “supports the proposition that states balance power rather than maximize it”.⁵⁸

Indeed, to comply with the anarchical ordering principle, the states are required to maintain the balance of power. To maintain the balance of power is

⁵⁶ Waltz 1979: 61.

⁵⁷ Waltz 1979: 126, emphasis added.

⁵⁸ Waltz 1979: 127.

to maintain a certain (power) relation in their external standing vis-à-vis each other.⁵⁹ And to maintain this power relation in their relation to each other – or a certain “distribution of capability” – is to consider *how* states are positioned in a “balance-of-power game” that, despite their willingness or perhaps consciousness, has nevertheless been played recurrently to restore the balance.⁶⁰ Thus emerged Waltz’s second specific definition of structure: the distribution of capability. In Waltz’s *Theory*, the states’ generation and application of power vis-à-vis each other are not constrained by their internal distribution of capability at all; rather, it is profoundly restricted by the distribution across the units.

Was a different type of distribution crucial for the states’ actions? Waltz’s reply was clear. It served as a distinct structure of “power-political game” and corresponded to a particular pattern of conducting the balance. It designated antecedent conditions for strategies and a distinct framework that simplified choices. It pointed to distinct rules for defining what kind of “political strategy” is likely to prosper, molding calculation (or choices), and mobilizing economic resources. Indeed, once embedded within these two games – a two-person bipolar game and five-person multipolar game – the performance of the units would *be* their positions within the system, and it might be positional to such an extent that the players themselves could (to a tremendous extent) even ignore that their choices were shaped by the game.⁶¹

Under multipolarity the choices (to forge alliance) are flexible, but the players’ strategies are uncertain, costly and rigid. The players are unable to ascertain “who threatens whom, about who will oppose whom, and about who will gain

⁵⁹ Waltz 1979: 97-8.

⁶⁰ Waltz 1979: 163. Two qualifications here demand caution. First, distribution of capability rules out the consideration of non-power elements, such as “traditions, habits, objectives, desires, and forms of government” and “revolutionary or legitimate, authoritarian or democratic, ideological or pragmatic” (Waltz 1979: 98). Second, the distribution of capability is to count states, not MNCs, and not all the states, but only the great powers. To measure a distribution of capability between the US on the one hand, and Cuba and North Korea on the other, is not only fallacious but meaningless not to consider the non-power relations, nor to compare power relation between the drastically unequal, as Wendt once famously illustrated the case between the US and Cuba.

⁶¹ For Waltz 1979: 98-9, “What emerges is a positional picture, a general description of the ordered overall arrangement of a society written in terms of the placement of units rather than in terms of their qualities.”

or lose from the actions of other states”.⁶² Under these circumstances, calculation was not easily to make, and action was necessarily orientated by the insight that the “flexibility of alignment narrows one’s choice of policies”. Thus, “uncertainty and miscalculation”, rather than enhancing the chances of peace, would gradually lead to war: both elements would engender the “unfolding of a series of events”, tilt the balance and incur a counter-balanced war.⁶³ Since “a state’s strategy must please a potential or satisfy a present partner”, only when “the game of power politics, if really played hard”, can decisively press the players into two rival camps. Hence, so “complicated is the business of making and maintaining alliances that the game” can be played only at the expense of imminent rigidity as “may be played hard enough to produce the result only under the pressure of war”.⁶⁴

In a bipolar game, by contrast, the choices are inflexible, but the strategies are clear, economical and flexible. The antagonism between the two camps would show “clarity of dangers” and anticipate “certainty about who has to face them”. In contrast to the uncertainty and miscalculation prevalent in the multipolar game, in its bipolar counterpart “the incentives to a calculated response stand out most clearly”.⁶⁵ Since the lesser power were relatively insignificant to their more powerful counterparts, the latter could dispense with complicated considerations and instead “make their strategies” in accordance with their “own calculations of interests”.⁶⁶ The states’ choices were thus “flexible” to the extent that they acquired the enjoyment of “wider margins of safety in dealing with the less powerful”, thus entitling them to the extent that they “have more to say about which [diplomatic/economic] games will be played and how”.⁶⁷ In a sharp contrast to the multipolar game, where the “flexibility of alignment made for rigidity of strategy”, in this bipolar game “rigidity

⁶² Waltz 1979: 165.

⁶³ Waltz 1979: 168

⁶⁴ Waltz 1979: 165-167.

⁶⁵ Waltz 1979: 173, 176.

⁶⁶ Waltz 1979: 170.

⁶⁷ Waltz 1979: 194.

of alignment...makes for flexibility of strategy and the enlargement of freedom of decision".⁶⁸ Instead of behaving sluggishly in response to the unfolding of a series of events, states had "to be wary, alert, cautious, flexible, and forbearing".⁶⁹ "Between parties in a self-help system", Waltz explained, "rules of reciprocity and caution prevail".⁷⁰

The different games also have separate rules that are pertinent to the conduct of balance of power and mobilization of economic resources. In multipolarity, the units maintain their positions by external balance. In bipolarity, they consolidate their positions by concentrating on internal capability. The "solidity of the bipolar balance" will invariably elude the third party's attempt to impact the dominant balance.⁷¹ A certain distribution of capability provides rules for a certain pattern of conduct, which is in turn manifested or will affect the mobilization of economic resources. Economically, the degree of interdependence is high in multipolarity but low in bipolarity. In a bipolar distribution of capability, a state relies less on interdependence than a multipolar one.

Indeed, for Waltz, the merit of a *system theory* lay in precisely this fact: "The intricacies of diplomacy are sometimes compared to those of chess. Neither game can be successfully played unless the chessboard is accurately described".⁷²

System and Structure in Theory (Part II): Theory and Its

Utilitarianization

Waltz's *Theory*, as I have endeavored to demonstrate, is at once a contrivance to distance from the conception of rationality as the internal composition of units,

⁶⁸ Waltz 1979: 169-70.

⁶⁹ Waltz 1979: 172-3.

⁷⁰ Waltz 1979: 175.

⁷¹ Waltz 1964: 105: "The French and Chinese, in acting contrary to the wishes of their principles partners... have demonstrated not their power but their impotence: their inability to affect the dominant relation in the world".

⁷² Waltz 1979: 159-60.

and an effort gravitating towards axiological rationality (that in turn stresses the external influence of “structure”). In the first sense it is a repudiation of the reductionist theoretical account that associates states action with their intention to maximize interest, motivation for power, and mind for playing the political game. In the second, it serves as a vigilant rejection of variants of system theory that are purely analytical or historically-sociologically contingent. If “Waltz’s work on the international system seeks to overturn all that went before it”,⁷³ then it must necessarily be due to Waltz’s unconventional conceptualization of system as a real, external, trans-historical game that exerts leverage over the unit’s action. A structure, for Waltz, is a sort of directive rule, an ordering principle, an order without order, an imperative, and a rule of the game designating preconditions for strategic calculation. It is an “interposition” that directs, attenuates, impedes, the agents’ pursuit and use of power. Indeed, Waltz’s *Theory* is pioneering and epoch-making mainly because of its rigorous endeavor to construct an axiological rational theory of international politics, a theory of “systematic rationality”.

Yet, Waltz’s *Theory*, being published just in the beginning of the rise of the second wave of utilitarian theorizations (as I show in chapter two, section two), is soon debased into a Rational-Choice version, misconstrued as a classic theory of utilitarian rationality. In order to understand how Waltz’s systematic rationality has been debased into a utilitarian one, it is crucial to delineate the subtle distinctions between the two terms (which share several terms such as “system” and “anarchy”) so as to fully comprehend their distinctive grammatical positions.

The initial point of engagement is with the term “system”. Indeed, with the publication of *Theory*, the whole of Anglophone IR was refashioned by the “system” theories of the early 1980s. But, largely as a consequence of the prevalence of Rational Choice and Game Theory, “system” was endowed with

⁷³ Hobden 1998: 47.

a meaning that not only had a very distinct denotation from Waltz's but which appeared as a bewildering analogy to the rather confused usages of the 1950s and 1960s. Two examples are strikingly illustrative in this respect.⁷⁴ One is the very name of "Structural Realism". When Stephen Krasner christened Waltz's *Theory* as "Structural Realism" in 1982 (a label ever since celebrated), the term "structural" was used to refer to the intellectual "orientations" that "conceptualize a world of rational self-seeking actors". Rather than showing how structure substantially preconditions the actors' strategic choices, the "structural realist perspective" becomes a presentation of "a world of sovereign states seeking to maximize their interest and power".⁷⁵ The other is Robert Keohane's "system analysis" attributed to Waltz. In Keohane's construal, for Waltz the concept of utilitarian rationality is indispensable for Waltz's "system analysis" precisely because it forges the link between structure and the states' actions. Without assuming the utilitarian rationality of the states to be given and constant, Keohane argues, the incentive and constraints generated by the structure, to which the states respond, will by no means be discernible. Yet if this rationality is taken for granted, Waltz's theory of balance of power will be self-contradictory, since every state seeks to maximize rather than balance power.

Is Keohane's "system analysis" the same as Waltz's system theory? Not really: three crucial differences require emphasis. First, whereas for Waltz a system must be functioning ontologically like a real game, Keohane is less aware of his use of system merely as an analytical tool. Second, whereas Waltz's system does not require the actors to have a constant property of maximizing profits, Keohane's system is dependent on such an assumption. A system for Waltz is a rule that pushes the actors' action into conformity to its designation through competition and socialization, reward and punishment, regardless of whether the actors are individualistically (internally) motivated by

⁷⁴ See more instances in Stein 1982: 140.

⁷⁵ Krasner 1982: 6-7. Similar to Ashley, Krasner considers Keohane and Stein as building their theories on "a conventional structural realist perspective".

interest maximization. Third, for Keohane systematic effects manifest conspicuously when the actors *constantly* hold a utilitarian rationality. Unless they do so, the change of incentive in the market cannot be transmitted to the responsive actors. But for Waltz a system will demonstrate its axiological-rational effects most conspicuously when the actors possess *inconstant* properties: whether internally socialist or capitalist, democratic or authoritarian, revolutionary or conservative, interest maximizing or not, the states will all be “shaped and shoved” by the structure and follow the rule of taking care of yourself, even if the imperative may sometimes be consciously neglected or defied. Waltz clarified this distinction in his “Reply to My Critics” (1986):

“Contrary to his [Keohane] statement, I do not differ with him over rationality, except semantically. I prefer to state the rationality assumption differently. My preference is based partly on fear that ‘rationality’ carries the wrong connotations. Since making foreign policy is such a complicated business, one cannot expect of political leaders the nicely calculated decisions that the word ‘rationality’ suggests. More significantly, my preference is based on the importance I accord, and Keohane denies, to the process of selection that takes place in competitive system. In structural-functional logic, behaviors are selected for their consequences.”⁷⁶

Rationality, for Waltz, connotes a “semantic” meaning different from the one asserted by Keohane. Instead of conveying interest maximization, Waltz employs the term to mean the “process of selection” in terms of “consequences”. To say that structure selects is for Waltz to say that those conforming to the most acceptable, social, practice are likely to prosper in a game (as I quoted above). Notice, in addition, that whereas for Keohane the actors have to react to the change of incentive unconditionally, Waltz even allows them to defy the

⁷⁶ Waltz 1986: 43-4.

rule whether it has been recognized or not. The third crucial difference is evidenced within Waltz's statement – which is obviously conditioned by the age of deterrence – that rationality remains a demand for “political leaders” to make “nicely calculated decisions” in “foreign policy”. It is quite different from the one ascribed to him by Keohane and others in two key respects: it not only refers to human beings as the subject of reason rather than the states, but it also has an Kantian dimension in its emphasis on the demand of the intellectual harness of emotion to carry out calculation. In this respect, Keohane and Waltz seem to be speaking drastically different languages of rationality.

Second, with the submergence of Waltz's original voice under the sweep of the second wave of the utilitarian movement (in which Rational-Choice and Game theorists masqueraded as “system” theories), the term “anarchy” also emerged as a point of divergence. Immediately after Waltz's theorization of “anarchy”, the term suddenly became chic within IR discourse. Like “system”, a term which subsequently became an “intellectual orientations”, “anarchy” was also posited throughout the 1980s as “the single most important characteristic underlying international relations”.⁷⁷ Although Waltz himself conceived of anarchy as sociologically axiological, his deployment of “market” and “firms” as analogies to anarchy and states appeared to render Waltz's *Theory* as inherently economic. Hence within only five years of Waltz publishing his *Theory*, the concept of anarchy was soon transformed from a conception of itself as a very order, ruled by the system to command units taking care of themselves, into one implying the absence of order and a license of the utilitarian-rational egoistic states to strive ruthlessly for their own good. Thus it was asserted that “Nations dwell in perpetual anarchy, for no central authority imposes limits on the pursuit of sovereign interests” – a dictum voiced by Kenneth Oye to launch the whole edited volume *Cooperation under Anarchy*

⁷⁷ Milner 1991: 143. It is in response to this order-less conception of anarchy popularized in IR that two leading scholars – Hayward Alker and Richard Ashley (who would later be labeled “Reflectivist” by Keohane) – prepared an edited volume entitled *After Neorealism: Anarchy, Power, and Community in International Collaboration*. This volume, although never coming out, had been well-referred even as manuscript around the turn of the 1990s and demonstrated the (in)famous conception of anarchy as the lack of order and rule.

(1985) – was widely invoked and echoed in the 1980s.⁷⁸ Grieco’s influential essay “Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation” (1988), a piece invoked in the previous chapter, similarly defined anarchy as “no overarching authority to prevent others from using violence...to destroy or enslave them”.⁷⁹

Third, in a particularly ironic development, Reflectivists such as Richard Ashley, Friedrich Kratochwil and Alexander Wendt, although committed to exploring the analytical ground beyond utilitarianism, also failed to recognize the sociological potential of *Theory*. In upshot they were to fall victim to the same misconceptions and misunderstandings as the utilitarianists such as Keohane and Krasner. In his understanding of Waltz’s idea of anarchy, Ashley did not capture Waltz’s proposition that anarchy is an ordering principle of self-help legislated by the system and maintained by the balance of power. Ashley instead considered that

“[*Theory*] therefore appeared to be a ‘sociological’ perspective on the states system rather than an individualistic or utilitarian perspective. However, despite occasional dignifying references to Durkheim’s sociology Waltz’s structural theory is modeled on the individualist rationalism of Adam Smith’s Political Economy. The ‘international system’ is an emergent property, a consequence of the coaction of a multiplicity of unitary, complete, and egoistic states oriented according to the logic of *raison d’état*...Waltz’s *raison d’état* thus collapses to technical reason, the logic of economy”.⁸⁰

For Ashley, Waltz’s “sociological perspective” is pseudo-systematic, since the international system becomes a product that is not at all productive. Anarchy seems to be a *product/consequence* of the coaction of the rational-egoistic units.

⁷⁸ Oye 1985: 1.

⁷⁹ Grieco 1988: 126.

⁸⁰ Ashley 1983: 481.

Waltz's constant clarification that the international system has to be externally productive (and functions independently of the rationality of the respective units) is accordingly overlooked by Ashley. Similarly, Kratochwil also neglects the insight that Waltz's *Theory* defines structure as a kind of directive rule. The balance of power, which Waltz considers as generated by the system in the first instance, is heavily criticized because

“the balance of power will only emerge under conditions of rationality among actors. [...] In the case of balance of power this means we must assume that the principle of rationality has been specified, and the maximization of power is assumed to be the underlying maxim of state action.”⁸¹

For Kratochwil, Waltz has to presume the utilitarian rationality of the actors. Without this presumption, the balance of power cannot function. Once again, Waltz's statement that the balance of power resembles a softened positivist-legal rule – (“soften” since states may disregard or disobey its direction) in which defiance does *not* invalidate the principle itself, is altogether overlooked. Wendt, in “The Agent and Structure Problem in International Relations Theory” (1987), concentrated on the third definition, with specific reference to the distribution of capability:

“neorealists’ individualist definition of the structure of the international system as reducible to the properties of states – to the distribution of capabilities – is perfectly consistent with the important role that system structures play in neorealist explanations of state behavior. Indeed, in both its decision- and game-theoretic version [Wendt means Mesquita] neorealism, like microeconomics, is characterized by ‘situational

⁸¹ Kratochwil 1982: 27-9.

determinism,' by a model of action in which rational behavior is conditioned or even determined by the structure of choice situations. [...] This definition leads to an understanding of system structures as only *constraining* the agency of preexisting states, rather than, as in world-system and structuration theory, as *generating* state agents themselves."⁸²

Wendt does capture here Waltz's central point that a distribution of capability is an antecedent condition for strategic calculation. Yet, do Waltz's actors undertake utilitarian-rational calculations in a manner similar to that designed by Mesquita? No; the crucial difference is that for Mesquita, an actor's conduct is decided by its own individual calculation, although the calculation taking a form of relational calculation. For Waltz, it is the *interrelation* between the actors that shape strategic calculation.

Before proceeding any further, three points deserve emphasis. Firstly, I argue that an immanent reading of *Theory*, uncontaminated by the later utilitarian interpretations of various kinds, reveals that Waltz's interpretation of rationality is deeply axiological. A contextual exposition of the "hidden dialogue" (some may prefer to call the "system debate") between Waltz on the one side, and Aron, Hoffmann, Rosecrance and Kaplan on the other, redisplay his pursuit of an ontologically real, transhistorical, external system which is constituted by an "anarchical" rule of self-help, and which is enforced by "reward and punishment", the balance of power, and the distribution of capability (each of which in turn conditions strategic calculation). Unfortunately, most of the thinkers of whom Waltz accused passed away or were incapable to make a counterblast,⁸³ which could have made explicit the axiological-rational basis of Theory.

The only noticeable exception is Morton Kaplan. In his book-length reply to Waltz – *Towards Professionalism in International Theory: Macrosystem*

⁸² Wendt 1987: 340-1, emphasis in original.

⁸³ Aron died in 1983. Hoffmann did not respond openly. Rosecrance (1981: 698-9), who compared *Theory* with Bull's *Anarchical Society* (1977) and criticized both for scarifying historicity for analytical simplicity, debated with Waltz (from 1980 to 1982) but directed the attention to the theme of "interdependence". Waltz and Rosecrance had further exchanges in Waltz (1982) and Rosecrance (1982).

Analysis (1979) – Kaplan explicitly criticizes Waltz for repudiating the significance of the assumption of rationality. First, Kaplan argues that Waltz's theory cannot "dispense with the concept of rationality".⁸⁴ For Kaplan, Waltz fails to make explicit the distinction between "individual rationality and collective rationality, and individual rationality and collective irrationality".⁸⁵ The latter, exemplified in the decrease of profits of firms in competitive market (Kaplan cites Waltz's own illustration as I did above), shows that when there are numerous actors, the relationship between individual rationality and systematic outcomes becomes uncertain/divergent. In this case systematic effect is independent of the individual rationality. But in the *Theory* constructed by Waltz, the number of actors are small, and thus in the maintenance of the systematic rule the actors have to assume some "rationality" to subscribe to them. This, for Kaplan, warrants that "individual and collective rationality coincide"; or at least, that "the actors have an incentive to observe rules that are consistent with equilibrium".⁸⁶ As Kaplan later enunciated,

"Although system-dominant systems usually can remain stable despite the system-irrational behavior of individual actors, their persistence assumes the intrasystem rationality of most actors. [...] Rational analysis, thus, is central to systems theories, including international systems, in which agents function. The criteria for rationality differ with the focus of analysis. If an actor wants to succeed in a particular system, it must know what the system rewards and punishes, that is, what rational interests are in these terms."⁸⁷

Rationality is a link between the system and actors. Rationality may not be an attribute of the system alone; this is because the actors need to understand the

⁸⁴ Kaplan 1979: 29.

⁸⁵ Kaplan 1979: 31.

⁸⁶ Kaplan 1979: 31.

⁸⁷ Kaplan 2000: 696.

systematic order – “what the system rewards and punishes” – if they want to succeed.

Second, although Waltz’s attempt to construct a closed, homeostatic, system temporarily demolished the line of enquiry pioneered by Aron, Hoffmann and Rosecrance, there would soon occur a revival of interest in that line of theorization under many rubrics, a topic that has to be reserved for the next chapter. Waltz, although intending to repress the historicity of system, conversely gave a most powerful impetus to the historicization of international relations.

Third, alas, Waltz’s attempt to construct a rigorous “system” theory is almost completely frustrated with the rise of the Neo-Neo theories. “System” becomes an analysis of the choices of the rational egoists; “anarchy” is understood as the ruthless pursuit of self-interest. It is against this background, however, that two scholars emerged to the forefront: anarchy, they argue like Waltz did, far from being a rules-less status, is in fact constituted and regulated by rules that designate the rationality of conduct. It is to these propositions that we shall now turn.

(ii) Rules and Norms All the Way Down: Rationality in Nicholas

Onuf and Friedrich Kratochwil’s Thoughts around the Turn of 1990s

Neo-Neo Theories and the Anarchy Problematique

When Onuf and Kratochwil confronted the IR in the early 1980s, they were astonished by the mainstream theorists’ “egregious lack of familiarity with legal theory”.⁸⁸ On the one hand, both Onuf and Kratochwil cultivated their thoughts in a background that was distinct from the economic orthodox: with the flow of

⁸⁸ Notice “in IR”, since both were regarded as international-law scholars intruding into IR.

various post-isms into the social sciences in the 1970s – Wittgenstein and Winch, Levi-Strauss and Habermas, Foucault and Bourdieu – Onuf and Kratochwil's thoughts were heavily conditioned by the anti-positivist orientation that not only positivism in jurisprudential sense but the one in a generally social-theoretical sense is repudiated as overly objectified and static. As Onuf recalled:

“The first generation of constructivists came out of a troubled times – a decade or so – in the world of scholarship. Great challenges from intellectual movements, including feminism, had swept through all the social sciences. Those of us who were not much satisfied to start with went back to basics. Some of us ended up repudiating even the basics, and others tried to think through the implications of new basis...We shared a sense that all is basically provisional, and beyond that a certain improvisational sensibility”.⁸⁹

This predilection on the provisional and “improvisational sensibility”, when encountered with the utilitarian theorists on the other hand, soon became incompatibly evident. “As one representative of ‘rational choice’ once humorously quipped”, Kratochwil used the anecdote repeatedly, “when the dangers of nailing down too many things were pointed out to him: ‘Listen, when you are equipped with my hammer, the whole world looks like a nail’.”⁹⁰

For Onuf and Kratochwil, what the utilitarian hammer had undistinguishably nailed down in Keohane's *After Hegemony*, Axelrod's *The Evolution of Cooperation*, and Waltz's *Theory*,⁹¹ leaves, or rather conceals, two unclarified problems. First, the external conditions of and complexity surrounding choice are evacuated. States do make decisions, but they rarely do so within a vacuum;

⁸⁹ Onuf 2001: 241.

⁹⁰ Kratochwil 1987: 303, 2001: 13.

⁹¹ First, Kratochwil remains the most careful reader of Waltz ever seen so far. His critique of Waltz is extremely comprehensive, ranging from criticizing Waltz's conception and application of international system as somehow ambiguous (Kratochwil 1982: 27, 1984b: 313, fn.18) to decrying the latter's positivism which can be seen everywhere. Yet, in a second place, for Kratochwil, Waltz has committed too many mistakes: reducing the complexity of international politics to “capability analysis” and employing a positivistic approach rather than hermeneutic one, are the two chief accusations among many others.

in a constantly changing environment, the states usually cannot have a clear and quick understanding of the circumstance in which they are involved. Rather than jumping to make choice merely in accordance with the imperative “you calculate”, the starting point will have to be “defining situations and thus in indicating to the other that one understands the nature of the ‘game’ in which one is involved”.⁹² “Individuals”, Onuf contended, “must choose courses of action that cannot be readily changed, often under circumstances that present no clear grounds for rational choice”.⁹³

Second, the consequence of optimal choice has been over-studied. As long as the focus is the optimal choice, the original, sophisticated, scenario in (process through) which the agent is required to make a choice within a number of choices must be dismissed as insignificant, since what is important here is only about whether the consequence is furthering or diminishing interest. International relations becomes indeed anarchical, a ruthless competition and struggle for making the most advantageous choice.

In order to remedy these two flaws, both Onuf and Kratochwil realized – as had Waltz – that to conceive of an order without an orderer in international politics is vital. Rules, norms, principles or even “imperatives” do exist and play a significant role in shaping states’ action. The “international arena”, rather than “a norm-less anarchy [a status rather than Waltzian principle]”, is itself a mode of organization. “The international legal order exists”, Kratochwil stressed once again, “simply by virtue of its role in defining the game of international relations”.⁹⁴ When writing his collaborative article “International Organization: A State of the Art on an Art of the State” (1986) with John Ruggie, Kratochwil later recalled vividly how he could no more agree with the former’s “pitch that no organization but the way of organizing, i.e. organization in the collective singular, should be the proper focus for analysis”.⁹⁵ Onuf, like Waltz and

⁹² Kratochwil 1989a: 48.

⁹³ Onuf 1989: 262.

⁹⁴ Kratochwil 1989a: 67, 251

⁹⁵ Kratochwil 2011a: 8.

Kratochwil, argued that “international relations was never a matter of anarchy [a status], any more than domestic societies could have been”.⁹⁶ In one occasion, Onuf even articulated more clearly than Waltz himself that there is a danger of “emptying anarchy of content”: anarchy, argued Onuf, not only needs to be carefully distinguished as an “incidence” rather than a “condition” characterized by the “absence of rule”, it also demands a recognition that “political society, however much or little centralized, and not possessive individualism, however enriched, explains the complexities of international relations”.⁹⁷ If anarchy is not synonymous with chaos and has a substantial content, then what will it turn out to be?

Games, Rules, and Rationality

In an oft-quoted manifesto criticizing “The Embarrassment of Change: Neorealism as the Science of Realpolitik without politics” (1993), Kratochwil made the following observation:

“Here the notion of a ‘game’, used as a metaphor for rule-guided action, *a la* Wittgenstein, provided a fruitful new beginning. It stimulated theoretical efforts in at least three ways: first, it showed that rules and norms are constitutive of social life and that they cannot be understood, therefore, in terms of the regulative rules and injunctions familiar from criminal law or the Decalogue. Second, it suggested that rules and norms are not simply the distillation of individual utility calculations but rather the antecedent conditions for strategies and for the specification of criteria of rationality.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Onuf 1989: 163, 185-95.

⁹⁷ Onuf 1989: 164-9.

⁹⁸ Kratochwil 1993: 75-6. The third is “it fundamentally changed our conception of action and communication”, an important point to which I shall return in the next section.

Although drawing on Wittgenstein and intending to be an embarrassment of Neorealism, Kratochwil's game was unexpectedly close to Waltz's. Like Waltz, who regarded the structure of the game as determinant of which "kind of player is likely to prosper", Kratochwil's game designated antecedent conditions for being strategic. In a similar manner to Waltz's system, which was also composed of ordering principles and imperatives, Kratochwil's game was replete with "rule-guided" action – a moderation of his stronger assertion, which resembled an imperative, that "human action in general is 'rule-governed'."⁹⁹ In analogy to Waltz's society-like structure (socialization), Onuf argued for a "paradigm" of "political society" in which "social relations, including international relations, could and did display evidence of being ruled arrangements". Like Waltz's units that may choose to abide or defy, Onuf's agents also have freedom to follow the lead or decline; yet, whatever their choice is, these rules "always offer a choice, either to follow them or not".¹⁰⁰

In both Kratochwil and Onuf's theory, international politics was portrayed as a rule-guided game or a rule-arranged social relation that molded choices. Similarly to Waltz's endeavor to conceive of an order without an orderer (and international politics as governed by the "anarchical order"), Kratochwil and Onuf regarded these external rules as indispensable for understanding and playing these games. A rule was constitutive for the game or social relations and, to this extent, could be conceived as the source of meaning. The rules' "pervasive presence...in guiding, but not determining, human conduct, gives it social meaning"; actions and deed could be comprehended only "against the background of norms embodied in conventions and rules which give meaning to an action".¹⁰¹ For Onuf these rules are exhaustive but can still be subdivided into instructive, assertive and commitment forms. Kratochwil, on the other hand, comprehensively distinguished the explicit rules, tacit rules, custom

⁹⁹ Kratochwil 1989a: 11.

¹⁰⁰ Onuf 1989: 164, 110.

¹⁰¹ Onuf 1989: 21-2, Kratochwil 1989a: 11. For Onuf, any social situation is a particular manifestation of a certain configuration of these rules.

(convention), institutional rules and precepts that signpost a direction of action.¹⁰²

Having laid down this framework, both Onuf and Kratochwil continued to argue that rationality is embedded within this rule-bounded game (situation). Rationality, rather than being internally ontological, is externally contextual. Even if in a semantic sense, Kratochwil cautioned, “it is not some property that is taken to exhaust the meaning of the term, but the meaning of rationality is seen to be constituted by the *use* of the term”.¹⁰³ “Rules and norms” were defined by Kratochwil as the “guidance devices which are designed to simplify choices and impart ‘rationality’ to situations by delineating the factors that a decision-maker has to take into account”.¹⁰⁴ “‘Rational choices’ can only be made on the basis of the acceptance of a ‘way of life’,” Kratochwil stressed.¹⁰⁵ They establish “such a framework of rationality” and serve as “the presuppositions of rational action”.¹⁰⁶ To be rational is not to maximize interests or repress one’s desire regardless of context. Rather, rationality is derived from its relation to the prevalent rule of which the agent is a part. Onuf argued that:

“Everyone who is competent acts rationally in a world of contingency. Hebert A. Simon has called this ‘bounded rationality’. The term is misleading...What is bounded, in various ways, is the situation in which choices are made. What bounds situations are rules....I hold that rules do not ‘govern’ all that is social. People always have a choice, which is to follow rules or not. Instead rules govern the construction of the situation within which choices are made intelligible. The simplest situation is one in which a single rule constitutes the boundaries of choice. Either one follows that rule or not. Most situations are bounded by a number of rules”.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Kratochwil 1989a: Ch.3.

¹⁰³ Kratochwil 1987: 310, emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁴ Kratochwil 1989a: 10.

¹⁰⁵ Kratochwil 1987: 318.

¹⁰⁶ Kratochwil 1989a: 50, 1988b: 219.

¹⁰⁷ Onuf 1989: 261.

Rationality is not bounded by itself, but by rules: for Onuf, utilitarian rationality is a particularly representative *construction* within which only one rule is allowed; in contriving this situation “exclusively bounded” by interest maximization,¹⁰⁸ the utilitarian theorist presents a picture of political society in which only interest and its calculation becomes the rule of conduct. Bringing more rules into consideration, rationality extends into rationalities. Like Waltz’s account of how different distributions of capability govern dissimilarly political interest and rational strategies, Onuf conceived of social action as occurring within “many intersecting boundaries deriving from competing rule sets”. Rules designate a special way of calculation which will in turn determinate the preponderance of a kind of interest. Rational choice (Onuf “intrapersonal calculation”) embodies a permissive rule and the maximization of interest; two person (inter-personal calculation) game shows directive rule and entails security, and finally a “global comparison” that involves instructive rules and the pursuit of standing.¹⁰⁹ “Resources are nothing until mobilized through rules, rules are nothing until matched to resources to effectuate rule”.¹¹⁰

This conception of rationality as rule-following is also illustrated by Kratochwil in an example which recalls Waltz’s account of changing strategy in different games. Consider, Kratochwil proposes, the “generalized attitude” and “generalized propensities” as the overarching preconditions for playing a utilitarian game. Consider then the prisoners’ dilemma and a coordination game (used by Arthur Stein in previous chapter, Fig. 2.10, 2.11). If Row and Column take a distinct attitude towards the game, the outcomes will become fundamentally different. If one actor displays an envious attitude towards a coordination game, then her preference ordering will become quite different and change into (3, 1) rather than (5, 5), i.e. a non-coordinate move. Conversely, if

¹⁰⁸ Onuf 1989: 263.

¹⁰⁹ Onuf 1989: 266-78.

¹¹⁰ Onuf 1989: 64.

both are playing a Prisoners' Dilemma but actors have sympathies towards each other, then their game will be transformed into a coordination game, and choices will be once again changed ($(1, 1) > (3, 1)$). The significance of attitude demonstrates that "only after an attitude towards a situation has been taken, does the utilitarian calculation become possible": until the players understand their companion's attitudes in addition to the pay-off structure can the "rational' choice be made".¹¹¹

Axiological Rationality as Intersubjective Rule-Following

So far I have exposed the similarity between Waltz, Onuf and Kratochwil's conceptions of rationality. All considered that rationality is conditioned by rule, order or principle within a certain realm. All confined rationality within a certain game without envisaging, as Fierke would do, that one rationality can be an intersection shared by many different but possible games.

In what follows I want to consider one aspect that differentiates Onuf and Kratochwil from Waltz, ultimately with a view to associating the former two more closely with Fierke: the intersubjectivity of rationality. Indeed, whereas Waltz acknowledged the "shape and shove" effect of structural rules but accounted for the mechanism only in terms of parsimonious rewards and punishments, Onuf and Kratochwil envisaged multiple mechanisms that would ensure the agent's axiological rationality. For this reason, rule-following must be more elaborated than a sheer, positivistic, mechanism. In "The Force of Prescriptions" (1984),¹¹² Kratochwil enumerated four mechanisms: the reward and punishment envisaged by Hobbes, the convention for reciprocal benefits explained by Hume (which for Kratochwil effectively explains the British participation in and acceptance of the European Economic Community and the Soviet entrance into the IAEA), the collective conscience discovered by

¹¹¹ Kratochwil 1987: 317-8.

¹¹² Kratochwil 1984b, reprinted with least changes as chapter four in Kratochwil 1989a.

Durkheim, and finally the emotional or passionate attachment to ideals held by Freud. Likewise, Onuf listed “denigration, mockery, ostracism”, “rights and duties, or reciprocities”, as mechanisms for enforcing rules of an instructive and commitment kind.¹¹³ If the colonist states defied the UN directions on decolonization (1960), for example, their conducts will be documented, debunked, and denounced in those instances where the rule is implemented by “embarrassing non-conforming members and even subjecting them to a hint of ostracism”.¹¹⁴

It is noticeable that within Kratochwil and Onuf’s pursuit of a more enriched account of rule-following, their employment of Durkheim’s social theory¹¹⁵ is pervasive: strikingly enough, Waltz also drew on Durkheim; but unlike Waltz, who used Durkheim’s theory of mechanical society to demonstrate that states are not differentiated, Kratochwil and Onuf deployed the counterpart of organic society to explain why moral conduct derives from collective consciousness. It is here that Onuf and Kratochwil’s concern with rule-following is distinguished as an “intersubjective” conduct: the agents follow rule neither because of individual calculation of interest, even in reciprocal forms, nor because of “the self-imposed criteria *of the agent*”.¹¹⁶

But how could agents follow rules intersubjectively? Whereas in Fierke’s theory, as we shall see, this is explained as two agents engaging in a common dialogue and acting “as if” there is a unity that follows, undermines or

¹¹³ See respectively, Onuf 1989: 120-1, 144-54. Reconsider Waltz’s (1979: 75-6) account of socialization: “In spontaneous and informal ways, societies establish norms of behavior. [...] Socialization brings members of a group into conformity with its norms. Some members of the group will find this repressive and incline toward deviant behavior. Ridicule may bring deviants into line or cause them to leave the group. Either way...societies establish norms and encourage conformity.”

¹¹⁴ Onuf 1989: 147;

¹¹⁵ In *The Division of Social Labor* (1893) Durkheim posed a categorical distinction between mechanical and solidary societies. On the one hand, there is a simplistic and mechanical society where the members are held together by repressive forces. The maintenance of such a rule-governed society is relied on coercion: punishment will follow dare the members challenge the social rules. In such a society, members are not allowed to differentiate themselves from others since it will paralyze the disciplining function of rule, render it incapable of keeping members in line and thus undermine the mechanically unified structure. On the other hand is the “solidary” society. Fulfilled as an ideal of modern society, Durkheim argued that a solidary society is maintained not by coercive rules but by rules that have been internalized within each member’s consciousness. As a great admirer of Rousseau, Durkheim associates the moral with solidary society, and physical force with mechanical society: coercive rules are materialistically external, and solidary rules are idealistically internal.

¹¹⁶ Kratochwil 1989a: 132, 137, emphasis added.

dismantles rules,¹¹⁷ Kratochwil had conversely mainly used two sorts of explication throughout his works in the 1980s (both of which provided a perhaps too unorthodox conception of rationality to be heeded by his contemporaries). One is his constant reference to R.M. Hare's *Language of Morals* and *Freedom of Reason* (1963), in which the universalization of moral claims is invoked. The other, which deserves more attention here, is his proposition that if the actors want to "reason about our other-regarding choices", then "the term 'reason' has then to be taken in a non-cognitivist sense".¹¹⁸ In this case:

"Reason is, then, concerned with the preconditions (or 'transcendental' conditions, we might say), of a 'moral' discourse, in which the effects of our actions on others can be assessed. Although not necessarily providing compelling solutions, it imparts at least a certain order and persuasiveness to the process of arguing and to its outcomes".¹¹⁹

Or, as Kratochwil proclaimed in paraphrasing Samuel Stoljar's *Moral and Legal Reasoning* (1980):

"reason is no longer taken in a cognitive sense, as a self-sufficient source of morality, but is given an analytical and self-reflective role; reason simply becomes our logical way of finding or of constructing a framework within which an orderly (and concludable) argument can be carried out. In this way [...] in the moral field rationality now provides, in a comparable procedure [to prudential rationality], those external or independent standards, without which we cannot reason about, let alone settle, our interpersonal grievances or complaints".¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Fierke 1998: 135-7.

¹¹⁸ Kratochwil 1989a: 138-9.

¹¹⁹ Kratochwil 1989a: 139.

¹²⁰ Kratochwil 1989a: 131.

Under this condition, reason provides an intersubjectively transcendent condition for rule following. Rather than merely conforming to what the rules have stipulated, the actors can now engage in a process of arguing about which rule should be followed and what counts as rational. Contestation, as opposed to coercion, defines rationality. “Attempts at a purely cognitivist account of what rationality is fail”, Kratochwil argued, “exactly because they leave out issues of endorsement evoked by the arousal or moral sentiments”; “to call something rational”, he continued, “means then to endorse it in terms of some norm or moral feeling that permits it”.¹²¹ Like the concept of ‘morality, the rational requires that “assessments need not be related to ultimate cognitive foundations, but can be understood as issuing from feelings...which humans acquire through socialization and participation in certain practices.”¹²² Hence rules, explained Kratochwil, can not only “mold decisions via the reasoning process”, “enable [actors] to act, to pursue goals”, but can also enable them “to communicate, to share meanings, to criticize claims and justify actions”.¹²³ They “establish inter-subjective meanings that allow the actors to direct their actions towards each other, communicate with each other, appraise the quality of their actions, criticize claims and justify choices”.¹²⁴ Furthermore, this intersubjective rule-following is related to the concept of reasoning and judgment. Kratochwil went on: “The debate concerning the rationality of an action or belief is, in short, a search for the basis of the endorsement or acceptance within a given domain of appraisal”.¹²⁵

Waltz, Onuf, and Kratochwil: Beyond the Realism/Constructivism

Divide

¹²¹ Kratochwil 1987: 311.

¹²² Kratochwil 1988: 208-9.

¹²³ Kratochwil 1983: 346.

¹²⁴ Kratochwil 1993: 75-6.

¹²⁵ Kratochwil 1987: 311. This can be interpreted either in a Habermasian sense as a demand for searching a mutual consensus, which necessarily entails cognitive rationality such as Habermas’ communicative one, or just an emphasis on the significance of pregiven rules within a domain.

In Waltz's own vocabulary, "rationality" is inexorably an attribute residing at the man level. He subsequently builds a theory upon an alternative foundation that is very different from the one that is commonly attributed to him. Distinguished by its "semantic" meaning, this alternative conception defines structure as following external rules (through reward and punishment) that cannot be crudely inferred from the individual actors' motivations. Kratochwil, in a similar vein, searches for the "reason" that has to be more than a cognitive part of the individual actors; it is ultimately this element which will serve as the external framework for deciding which is rational. For Waltz, the actor's position within a distribution of capability conditions strategic choices (in the making diplomatic of commitments) and the play of the balance-of-power game. For Kratochwil and Onuf altogether, rules are not only an antecedent condition for deciding what kind of strategy is likely to prosper and what kind of interest will prevail, but the generalized "emotional position" of the actors that determines their strategic preferences.

Although the intersubjectivity of rule-following profoundly distinguishes Waltz from the latter, this distinction *can* also be viewed from another angle, which suggests that Onuf and Kratochwil are providing complementary rather than competitive answers in response to Waltz. Rules have to be followed. Actions must (or should) be axiologically rational. Outcomes will be produced in following the rules. Although the individual actors may not be rational and defy the rule, their conducts will be shaped towards axiological conformity through a process of competition, socialization, denigration, emotional attachment, argumentative contestation and mutual endorsement. What Waltz paints is a softened picture of directive rule. Onuf and Kratochwil add rules of the assertive, commissive, and communicative (and other) kinds. The axiological rationality maintained by reward and punishment in a closed system is supplemented

rather than superseded by the more developed and complicated mechanisms of enforcement.¹²⁶

Rather than a mechanistic account of international politics, Waltz's Theory appears as a latent form of constructivism: to this extent, many of his guiding premises appear to be quite compatible with a Constructivist perspective. In the next section I shall turn to a female thinker who has not only animatedly rediscovers the implicit sociological potential in Waltz's *Theory* but who also provides a much more intersubjective and dynamic account of rationality than Onuf and Kratochwil.

***(iii) Changing Games, Changing Rationalities and Changing
Strategies: K.M. Fierke on the Concept of Reason***

The "Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory"¹²⁷

For over a quarter of century since the debut of Onuf and Kratochwil in 1989, the Constructivist movement had swept Anglophone IR. Despite the geometric growth of works bearing the name of "Constructivist", however, there have been few to continue laboring on the idea of axiological rationality expounded by Onuf and Kratochwil. Why were the Constructivists seemingly uninterested in the concept?

In fact, the concept remained crucial in many Constructivist scholars' view, but discrepancy arose as to how it was so. To invoke Michael Barnett's aphorism – when "baulking at homo economicus, many international relations theorists have turned to homo sociologicus and images of society that are

¹²⁶ C. Wight (2006) once suggested that Onuf and Kratochwil's theories of rules were essentially the ones of structure. Either to see Waltz's structure as rule or to see Onuf and Kratochwil's rules as structure, their thoughts do converge on the shared emphasis on external

¹²⁷ The title is Checkel's (1998).

culturally and thickly constituted”¹²⁸ – they soon differed from each other in *how* the culturally constituted can be thickened. On the one side, there were those who proclaimed that utilitarian rationality is still a powerful device for making sense of international politics, provided the domestic cultural preferences can be integrated into the framework. These “cultural rationalists” (as I have illustrated in the last chapter), shocked and shadowed by the sudden collapse of Soviet Union, equated a cultural study with the projection of an agent’s internal value to external world politics in Katzenstein’s *The Cultures of National Security* (1996), *Cultural Norms and National Security* and Johnson’s *Cultural Realism* (1998). Emanuel Adler, in his famous manifesto for “Seizing the Middle Ground” (1997), voiced the formulation that “constructivism means studying how what the agents themselves consider rational is brought to bear on collective human enterprise and situations”.¹²⁹ This seemingly complementary or even compromising position towards the “mainstream” utilitarian rationalists was worsened by the release of Wendt’s *Social Theory*. Although Wendt’s *Social Theory* is a rare attempt to argue that it is the international “cultures” that condition political actions – here “culture” functions like Waltz’s ordering principle, Onuf and Kratochwil’s rule – the thick Constructivists still turned away from Wendt, becoming more vigilant towards and increasingly concerned with the tendency to interweave with the mainstream positivism under the disguise of a social theory, and suspecting whether it is tenable to build even a structural theory on the epistemological foundations of utilitarian Rationalism.

On the other side are the scholars who consider that external rules have much significance than the mere externalization of internal qualities. More to Matha Finnemore’s *National Interest in International Society* (1996) showing how the UNESCO can shape the states’ actions, Audie Klotz in her *Norms in International Relations* (1995) studied how “systemic norms affect state interests” and “furthers attempts among choice-theorists to contextualize

¹²⁸ Barnett 2002: 100.

¹²⁹ Adler 1997: 329.

rationality”.¹³⁰ Fierke, for another instance, criticized the *petit constructivistes* for their constricted concentration on how the agents bring to the collectivities of what they believe as rational: it projects their internal or subjective culture (or calculation) to the whole world. Furthermore, the compromise between Wendt and the Rationalists was alerting. Some responded by deploring this “New Orthodoxy”;¹³¹ others, including Fierke, initiated a movement to “go back to Waltz” and criticized Wendt for failing to go beyond Waltz’s *Theory* and demonstrated how Waltz, despite speak of a positivistic language, had in fact constructed an essentially Constructivist or sociological theory of international politics.

It is within this general background that Fierke’s works, despite having a disproportionate fame, outstand many others in her explicit cultivation of an externally axiological rationality. At once inspired by Wittgenstein that influences Onuf and Kratochwil *and* looking at Waltz as an important precursor, Fierke has constructed a thickly interpretative theory of axiological rationality.

Axiological Rationality in Language Games

Like Waltz, Onuf and Kratochwil, Fierke’s rationality is also defined as rule-following. Yet, unlike Waltz, whose veiled language of axiological rationality is sometimes difficult to uncover (primarily because of his positivistic expression) – a structure is occasionally described even as a physical force rather than as the rules of a game – Fierke accordingly avows that her idea of rationality is built on linguistic philosophy (Wittgenstein’s language game), and thereby reiterates her hostility to a positivistic vocabulary.¹³² But although she like Kratochwil locates rationality in relation to Wittgenstein’s idea of language game,

¹³⁰ Klotz 1995: 18, 169.

¹³¹ Kratochwil 2000.

¹³² The best statement remains Fierke 2002.

Fierke's conception of rationality is at once different from and similar to Kratochwil's account of how rationality is located within a given language game.

To begin with the differences. The first difference is that for Fierke international politics should not be conceptualized merely through "the notion of a 'game'" (as in Kratochwil's manifesto). Rather, international politics is the (possible) interplay or coexistence of plural games (I shall expand upon this point in more depth in the next section). At this point it suffices to say that to consider international politics as a game always implies a one-corresponding-to-one relation between game and rationality, whereas to view international politics as the possible existence of plural games indicates that one rationality may be simultaneously dispersed across several games.

Second, language games are integral to international political conduct, rather than merely "used as a *metaphor* for rule-guided action" as Kratochwil states. Language games, for Fierke, "weave together acts with language", and "with other types of action involving material objects, such as deploying nuclear weapons". There is no act without language, and no language without act. In Fierke's language game, "material capability is linguistically constituted", and political moves "are language use in action".¹³³ The action of threatening to deploy nuclear missiles – for instance, the arrangement of Pershing II missiles in NATO countries – is recurrently invoked by Fierke to show that language games are "specific moves with language" as well as the act of "making a commitment" or "promise".¹³⁴ Even the deployment of nuclear weapons becomes a language use in action, a move in the language game. Unlike the explanation "trivializing life and death experiences at the international level by drawing on game metaphors", language games are "not 'mere games' but rather acts by which we are connected and reconnected with a particular kind

¹³³ Fierke 1998: 211.

¹³⁴ Fierke 1998: 74, 46-7.

of experience”.¹³⁵ Fierke’s language game is characterized by a practical view where the material objects and language games are mutually constituted.

Third, Fierke’s emphasis on the constitutively practical features of language game displaces and marginalizes the role played by speech. Unlike Onuf and Kratochwil, whose agents can use criticism and contestation to enforce rationality, Fierke’s actors are less communicative and muter than Onuf and Kratochwil have supposed. Indeed, Fierke once articulated, borrowing Kratochwil’s tone, that “without these shared rules [of language games] we could not begin to communicate with one another, attribute meaning to objects or acts in the world, think rational thoughts or express personal feelings”.¹³⁶ But whereas for Kratochwil the language game is played by *verbal* exchange, with the rules being enforced by communication and justification of claims, Fierke’s game is played more by deeds (such as the deployment of missiles) rather than by speeches. This is also exemplified in her critique of Habermas’ communicative rationality. Habermas’ division between communicative and strategic action is unconvincing, because communicative action through speech cannot have autonomy and both are therefore just two instances of the *use* of language. “All communication, both communicative and strategic, is intersubjectively and dependent on the shared rules for its meanings”.¹³⁷ Habermas’ two modes of rationality are nothing but two specific instantiations of how language games are played in accordance with different rules. For Fierke, to conceive of actors as capable of making communicative-rational arguments presupposes an “abstract and universal criteria of rationality”.¹³⁸

Yet in other respects, Fierke’s idea of rationality and language games also bears remarkable resemblance to Kratochwil’s. First, notice that Fierke’s emphasis on the practical trait of language games, although silencing the actors, reinforces her resemblance with Onuf and Kratochwil’s emphasis upon the

¹³⁵ Fierke 1998: 110. Notice, however, that this was a criticism on Game Theory, not Kratochwil.

¹³⁶ Fierke & Nicholson 2001: 11.

¹³⁷ Fierke 1998: 13.

¹³⁸ Fierke 1998: 12.

contextual characteristics of rationality. In her critique of Game Theory – especially those of Deterrence Theorists such as Schelling rather than Axelrod targeted by Onuf and Kratochwil – Fierke argues that rationality resides only in the application of linguistic moves within a game rather than in the assumptions about them. It is important to grasp “the meaning in an unfolding context”.¹³⁹ For conduct in international politics closely resembles chess; as Fierke remarks, “strategic action can no more be detached from language than the meaning of the objects with which chess is played, or the rationality of moves within this game, can be detached from a language of chess”.¹⁴⁰ The strategic rationality conceived by both game theorists and Habermas has mistakenly “separate[d] out strategic rationality as prior to context”.¹⁴¹ “To assume the rationality of actors”, as Fierke later recapitulated, was the characteristically a-contextual error committed by the “models of negotiation” and “models of dialogue”.¹⁴² For Fierke, as for Waltz, Onuf and Kratochwil, rationality is not to be assumed but contextually understood within the context of a broad game.

Second, rationality is contextually dependent upon the rules of the game. Although she outlines an ambiguous definition of rule,¹⁴³ Fierke’s purpose in defining rationality in terms of rule-following is clear. “Game theorists”, Fierke argued, “have emphasized the rationality of individual moves, but say very little about the ‘rules of the game’. The question is whether strategic rationality can ever be detached from the content of a specific game”.¹⁴⁴ Without these rules as antecedent conditions, “it makes no sense to ask whether a move is rational until we have identified the game itself or the structure of rules within which a move has *this meaning*, is undertaken with *this object*, and is rational or irrational *given a position within a game in process*.” As Wittgenstein’s dictum

¹³⁹ Fierke 1998: 164.

¹⁴⁰ Fierke 1998: 11-2.

¹⁴¹ Fierke 2002: 348. This erroneous tendency even includes, she continued to say, “Wendt’s constructivism”.

¹⁴² Fierke 2005: 136.

¹⁴³ Fierke 1998: 17-20, where Fierke contrasts rule with law without making much clarifications on rule per se.

¹⁴⁴ Fierke 1998: 20.

to “look and see” stipulates, rationality is only discernible in relation to the specific rules.¹⁴⁵

Third, rationality must be understood as an external rather than internal property. In Game Theory, to take a negative instance, the actors are assumed to be rational interest maximizers, who act independently of each other in the midst of the different games that are played. Their common rationality is aggregated by and reducible to individual attributes. Their plays are rational in individual choice but might result in collective irrational (Pareto sub-optimal) outcomes. What needed to be envisaged, on the very contrary, is an intersubjective rule upholding “relations between rationality and structures of meaning”.¹⁴⁶ “The focus is on *meaning* as a fundamentally *social*, rather than purely individual property”; accordingly “not only the meaning of an act but its rationality” has to be defined as a collective property among the actors and their function within antecedent context.¹⁴⁷ “The space of rational calculation”, Fierke cautioned in a Waltzian tone, is “determined by the type of context. Any one actor may through a choice of actions influences the range of possible and plausible reactions by another, but these meanings are prior to any individual”.¹⁴⁸ Like Kratochwil – perhaps more like Waltz – Fierke frequently pronounces that rule-following cannot be explained as an agent’s following of its own psychological design or motivation. This will once again

“shift attention to the context – and explicitly a social context – as the necessary condition of rationality. [...] For Wittgenstein the central issue was not to identify motives, intentions, or rationality of individuals. The central thrust of the argument is one about the dependence of our thoughts, intentions, or rationality – not to mention our experience of the external

¹⁴⁵ Fierke 2001: 123-4, emphasis in original. Unlike Kratochwil’s demonstration of how generalized attitude can change a game, Fierke did not provide much specification.

¹⁴⁶ Fierke 2001: 123.

¹⁴⁷ Fierke & Nicholson 2001: 18-9, emphasis in original.

¹⁴⁸ Fierke 2002: 348-50.

world – on an intersubjective language and context which is prior. [...] It rather means that our room for maneuver, the boundaries of what we can reasonably think or what will be considered rational, are not defined by individual minds but by a context of intersubjective rules, historically, socially and/or culturally defined”.¹⁴⁹

Fierke’s notion of rationality, which is reflected in her critique of Game Theory and Communicative Theory, presents a construal that is embedded in practical language games which are composed of intersubjective rules. Material object, language games, and the rationality of move within the games, have been interweaved together. Although characterized by her emphasis on the multipolarity of games and the intersubjective *play*, Fierke’s idea of rationality recalls elements within the work of Waltz, Onuf and Kratochwil: it is dependent on the designation of the intersubjective rules of the language games.

The “Rationality of Moving towards a New Game”: Grammatical Investigation in Language Games

The originality of Fierke’s pioneering interpretation of rationality can be said to derive from its proposition that axiological rationality should not be understood to be merely reproductive. Language games are many. Rule-following rationality should not merely account for the maintenance of one or several games, but the very dynamic should change in the transition from one game to another. Hence, whereas for Kratochwil rationality is used for imparting intelligibility to how a game is played by actors, Fierke stresses that rationality should be used for examining the transition of games. Whereas Waltz uses axiological rationality to show how the two games (bipolarity and multipolarity) are differently played and self-contained, Fierke wants, as I show below, to

¹⁴⁹ Fierke & Nicholson 2001: 19.

demonstrate how the bipolar Cold-War game is transformed even when the axiological rationality of bipolar conduct remains constant.

But how can rationality be rule-following while at the same time dynamic? The solution offered by Fierke travels in a diametrically opposed direction to the one offered by Onuf and Kratochwil. Whereas they include several kinds of rules within a game to enrich the mechanism of enforcement, Fierke proposes that one single rule may be simultaneously shared by several games. For Onuf and Kratochwil, the crux is to envisage “one game multiple rules” (my term): different kinds of rule, ranging from positivistic (reward or punishment) to intersubjective (discursive communication or contestation), can ensure that the agent acts in a way that is axiologically rational. For Fierke, however, the crux is not to envisage “one game multiple rules”, but “one rule multiple games” (my term). Fierke conceived of “two players following different but interfacing rules”, or “the rationality of *possible* moves”.¹⁵⁰ One rule may be shared by the interplay or (possible) coexistence of several games. The same rationality following rule can thus overlap across several games, while the same rationality can give rise to different moves, each of which nonetheless aligns with the pre-requirement of rationality.

For Fierke, the rules that can be shared across several games are special. Drawing upon Wittgenstein’s “grammatical investigation”, Fierke defines these rules as “grammatical”. These grammatical rules are directed to the “‘*possibilities*’ of phenomena” rather than the phenomenon *per se*, because these rules gave rise to different applications upon the basis of the same grammar. Or, to use Fierke’s own analogy of originality, a rule serving as the grammatical link between several games could generate a move comparable to that which takes place in a utilitarian game and which corresponds in turn to different payoffs and outcomes (consider a centipede or extended form of game).¹⁵¹ “Like the notion of a game tree”, Fierke explained, “a grammar can

¹⁵⁰ Fierke 1998: 22, 131, emphasis added.

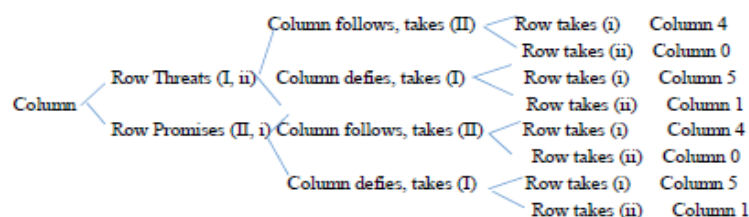
¹⁵¹ See Fierke 1998: Ch.3, *passim*. Two caveats here. In Wittgenstein’s own works a grammatical investigation is a

be used to identify how the boundaries of movement are transformed at different points in a game”.¹⁵² A grammatical move informed by rule can maintain, transform, restore or dismantle a game characterized by distinct consequences. In another form, a grammatical rule was expounded in a critical relation to the Postmodernist skepticism:

“Some critical constructivists and postmodernists have discounted logic and rationality because the discipline of international relations – and modernity in general – have turned them into an end in themselves, and an end that reinforces the status quo. Another take...is that humans do reason, but this is less a reflection of an objective world – objective as independent of human meaning – than a part of our grammar for operating in different types of social or political context”.¹⁵³

The same grammatical rule could thus operate in several contextually distinct regions. A rule, requiring the actors to follow it, might give rise to moves that signposted several directions. This was what Fierke named the “rationality of moving towards a new game”: a single move informed by a rule could be shared by, and constitute the transition from, the old and new games.¹⁵⁴

rule-guided conduct, but in Fierke’s account the *emphasis* is shifted to a rule-guided *conduct*. Thus, when expounding what a grammar was, Fierke not only failed to explain grammar in terms of rule, but constantly compared to the concept of move in Game Theory, referring to it as “a grammar of moves”. This confused rule with move and once again redirected to the ambiguous definition of rule in Fierke’s thought. Second, Fierke herself did not provide any extended form of game to make her statement clear. I use Schelling’s game of deterrence as an illustration (see below, the extended form of Fig. 2.3). Fierke seemingly wanted to argue that threat and promise, as grammatical rules, could lead the play of game into various kinds of games (it was deterrence when column gains 4).



¹⁵² Fierke 1998: 51-2,

¹⁵³ Fierke 2002: 251-2, see also 1998: 47.

¹⁵⁴ Fierke 1998: 130-1.

Consider Fierke's own illustrations. Unlike Waltz, who was primarily interested in the distinct ways of playing bipolar and multipolar games, Fierke instead focused on how the bipolar game played into collapse. The end of the Cold War was "the collapse [that] was generated in the tension and conflict between these two games", rather than "a contest between the zero-sum game of the Cold War and an alternative positive-sum game".¹⁵⁵ The first stage started with the inauguration of the Reagan administration (from 1981) and ended with Gorbachev's rise to the position of General Secretary of the Politburo (1985). During this period, both camps wanted to maintain the Cold-War structure and a new Cold War was seemingly initiated. The USSR wanted to restore the tightened rule over the Eastern communist states within the Warsaw Pact (with the unintentional effect that protest movements most notably Poland's Solidarity, became more prominent). The Strategic Defense Initiative (1983), intended by the US to maintain the old Deterrence game, conversely stirred internal dissent within the Western alliance, and roused civil movements that called for nuclear disarmament. To "maintain" was a grammatical rule implying a rationality that interfaced two games: it at once pointed to the consolidation of alliance, intensification of confrontation, and renewal of the old game. It simultaneously suggested the potentiality of discord, counterproductive responses, which arose from a social refusal to become hostages in the broader superpower struggle, and a new game in which allies were pushed further apart.

In the second stage, Gorbachev, after taking power in 1985, made the gesture of *détente* towards the Europeans, and thus signaled a Soviet willingness to explore the political possibilities of moderation, mediation and compromise. By 1986, both Reagan and Gorbachev were following the same grammatical rule of "restructuring". The rationality of Gorbachev's action resided in his restructuring of the Soviet foreign policy into a more moderate

¹⁵⁵ Fierke 1998: 155.

defense strategy towards the West. Reagan, at the same time, also endeavored to restructure the Western camp. The rule of restructuring was crucial, since it informed the dualistic move to manage the internal alliance and to initiate adjustment towards the external camp. It pointed to a rationality that was reinforcing the status quo, an old Cold-War game, and the opening up of the possibility of concession; in short, an entirely distinct post-Cold-War game.

In the third stage, both the US and USSR jointly collapsed the bipolar game. And its collapse was not due to the bad play of the Soviets, Fierke contended. It was not their inconformity to the rule or their “irrational” strategy (in a utilitarian sense) that laid them open to geopolitical dangers and failures. Rather, the end of the Cold War derived from an *interplay* between the US and Soviet Union and “the dialectical tension between competing games”. Rather a unilateral triumph of the West through a “unilinear” process, the rule of the bipolar game was as maintained as changed in an ongoing process.¹⁵⁶

It is also worthwhile to consider her analysis of the Bosnia War (1999). NATO intended to play a game of compellence, and accordingly deployed bombardment to “compel the Serbs to stop their aggressive acts towards the safe havens”:

“However, given the context and the identities involved, the Serbs had an alternative move available to them which transformed the game. Just as Saddam Hussein, in the context of the Gulf War, took Westerners hostage in order to deter NATO from realizing its threat, the Serbs took peacekeepers hostage and used this as leverage in bargaining for a promise that the bombing [on the Serbs] would stop. From the perspective of the original Western game of compellence, this move may not have initially been imagined or it may have been categorized as ‘irrational’. However...the move on the part of the Serbs may be considered rational in so far as it involved

¹⁵⁶ Fierke 1998: 159, 163.

following the rule of a different but interfacing game. This move transformed the context of choice for the West. They were then confronted with a 'terrorist' game..."¹⁵⁷

By taking hostages, the Serbs were simultaneously playing both an old and new game. The "rationality" of their conduct, if understood rigidly within the old game, might become unintelligible. Yet, it would become more intelligible if its rationality was comprehended as moving towards a new game, or within the context of the "rule of a different but interfacing" terrorist game.

(iv) Conclusion

Two Traits of the Axiological Language: Externality and Enforcement

The language of axiological rationality has two characteristics: its definition of rationality as an external relationship and its emphasis on how to create, maintain and transform such a relationship.

It is equally apparent that terms such as "rule", "game", "principle", "order", and "imperative" reoccur frequently within the utterances of the axiological-rational language. And it is in relation to these terms that rationality is identified as a relational property between the actors' conducts and these external rules. For Waltz, the international "power-political game" is conditioned by the anarchical ordering "principle", a principle which should be understood to be "imperative". Even the balance of power, he argued, would be changed in the ways of strategic calculation, a feature which would be simultaneously evidenced in an equivalent shift in the rules of diplomatic conduct (with both corresponding to the broader shift from a multipolar to a bipolar game). This system-orientated understanding of rationality would later become a more

¹⁵⁷ Fierke 1998: 22-3. Here it would be intriguing to question how would Waltz, Onuf and Kratochwil analyze this case?

explicit, and prominent, feature of the works of Onuf, Kratochwil and Fierke. For them, rationality is the property imparted by rules to situations, presupposed in the rules guiding conduct and anteceded by the attitude towards a game. Each aspect could be said to depend upon the language game in question and reside within intersubjective contextuality.

It is noticeable that all the thinkers of axiological rationality have argued strongly against the tendency to reduce rationality to the level of the individual agent. Their endeavors to distance from utilitarian rationality are exemplary. Waltz has consciously repudiated the possibility of viewing consequence as following individualistic intentions (the logic of consequence) or assuming “a necessary correspondence of motive and result”. For him, an explanation in terms of the internally rational property falls into the reductionist trap, and thereby overlooks the fact that political leaders’ conduct are shaped by the external condition. Onuf and Kratochwil explicitly argue that the individual calculation of interest, operated under the various condition of games – rule “bounded” situations, “ways of life”, and “attitudes” towards the circumstance – is far from being the final arbiter of rational conduct. Rationality cannot be an “idiosyncratic” attribute but instead must be a consensus or endorsement of a “universalizing” nature. In Fierke’s neat terms, rationality is “a fundamentally social property” that cannot be located in the “motives, intentions or rationality of individuals”. Rational Choice and Game Theory have failed to realize that rather than being a property residing in the individual minds, rationality is inherently “intersubjective”. Furthermore, to compare Waltz’s criticism of the “man” level and Fierke’s critique of Habermas may also be illuminating.

Second, further to this external conception of rationality is the issue of enforcement. As I forewarned in the beginning, axiological rationality rarely supposes that the rule-following act is determined, automatic and spontaneous. On the contrary, axiological rationality is intimately connected to the problem of ensuring that the rule can be followed within a game. In this aspect, axiological rationality can be said to develop in opposition to its Kantian and utilitarian

counterparts: it does not keep a single relation constant (between intellect and interest/morality, or between calculation and utility/certainty) and then assimilate more objects as well as subjects into it; rather, it complicates the relation between the agent and external rules into multiple possibilities. This characteristic is a particularly prominent feature within the work of Waltz, Onuf and Kratochwil. In Waltz's *Theory*, axiological rationality is enforced by competition, socialization, reward and punishment. These mechanisms conform them to the anarchical ordering principle (i.e. taking care of yourself, the balance of power), and orientate the agents (who are distinguished by differing distributions of capability) to behave in different ways to achieve this ultimate end (in bipolarity, the agents gather strength internally as a means through which to balance each other). Anarchy is itself an imperative: he who defies the rule shall perish, and he who follows them will prosper! In Onuf and Kratochwil's account of enforcement more activity and complexity were endowed on rules. The agent enters into a process of being coerced, exhorted, mocked, rebutted, etc.

How Rules are Recognized: Waltz's Idea of Rationality Reconsidered

Axiological reason, as I have demonstrated, begins from the discernment of what the external rules are and how to conform to them, not from what the agent wants and the associated striving for their concrete realization. If to be rational is to discern what a rule is and then follow it, then one question naturally arises: how can actors recognize such rules?

This question is crucial if we are to grasp why many theorists have ascribed "rationality" to Waltz's *Theory* (however the term may be constructed). Indeed, the problem of recognition poses a particular difficulty to Waltz, and not to Onuf, Kratochwil and Fierke. For them, rationality presupposes intersubjective recognition. Kratochwil accordingly insists that the pursuit of reason can be equated with the contrivance of a "precondition" of "moral discourse", this

course of action is in turn understood to establish the basis for a contestation of the precise meaning of the “rational”. To “call something rational”, as he clearly states, necessitates the endorsement of “norm or moral feeling that permits it”, which means that “humans acquire through socialization and participation in certain practices”. Meanwhile, Fierke similarly insists that reason can be defined as “grammar for operating in different types of social or political contexts”. Rationality is dependent upon the languages games in which the actors have been involved, and by the rules which bind them. Rationality is thus intersubjectively defined, justified, contested, followed and transformed.

Waltz’s *Theory*, however, lacks this intersubjective dimension, which conceives of rationality as being contested by, but at the same time irreducible to, social actors. As is well-known, Waltz conversely posits the controversial claim that there are some principles of conduct that actors have acted on for two millennia without realizing their existence. The imperative to “take care of yourself” has been obeyed (accordingly states have balanced rather than maximized power as a means to ensure their “survival”) ¹⁵⁸ – yet actors, in following rules that have been legislated by the system, may be unconscious of their origin or even their very existence. The actors can be axiologically rational without being cognitively or intentionally so. Their rule-following acts, as Waltz constantly reiterated, require no assumption of maximizing interest, of a “relentless striving to increase their power”, of a “constancy of will”, and even no perception of rules that ultimately determine “the structure of the game”!

These points in turn raise the question of whether IR theorists’ insistence on a presupposed rationality of *Theory* are indeed justified. I argue that that they are, as long as the idea of rationality imputed to Waltz is a “systematic” rather than utilitarian conception. Keohane, for instance, has indeed realized that Waltz presents the structure as so external to its agents that it appears almost as if the former stands completely independently of the units: as a consequence,

¹⁵⁸ If they do not, the system will shape and shove their action by reward and punishment.

the observer loses a sense of the link between the systemic order and the response of the relevant agents. His error, however, is to point to the indispensability of the agents' rationality, as if once this *internal* attribute is kept constant the systematic incentive can be transmitted to, and responded to, by the individual. Kaplan and Knutsen, on the other hand, come closer to a correct analysis when they emphasize the necessity of an axiological rationality, an "intra-system" or "systematic" form that has a dimension intertwined with, but not reducible to, the actors. What is needed is an understanding that derives from a very different semantic meaning (as Waltz himself recognized): this meaning would in turn correspond to successful and acceptable practices that are designated by a system that is external to the actors.

The Problems of Historical Change

The concept of Axiological rationality may raise a number of problems.¹⁵⁹ Among these problems, the most serious is that of history. When perceived in this context, rules, norms and games, once created, will not only have a logic but a life of their own. Rather than appearing to be immutable to the erosion of time, they come into existence at a certain point in the historical process and vanish at another. Instead of persisting in ruling actors' conduct, they are amenable, collapsible, and transformable into distinct forms and contents. In fact, it is precisely because of his proclamation of the perennially anarchical-ordering principle of international politics that Waltz had been subject to forceful and sustained attack. Similarly, Fierke's insight of the rationality of changing games should have been developed: the "unfolding" of international events, Fierke urged, should be conducted "in much the same way that the observer of

¹⁵⁹ Those problems include: what is exactly a rule? Will the interplay of rules be a difficulty for axiological-rational thinking? Has the issue of agency and ways of enforcement been clarified enough? See for instance the special issue edited by Lang (*et al.*) 2006.

a chess match explain to an audience the relationship between different moves and the eventual outcome of the game”.¹⁶⁰

Indeed, in the next chapter I shall turn to a conception of rationality as immanent rather than transcendent within a historical process, specific rather than universal, tensional rather than unapprehensive. And its name is *historical reason*.

¹⁶⁰ Fierke 1998: 19-20

Chapter IV. Historical Reason

When compared to utilitarian and axiological reason, historical reason is a conception that is difficult to pin down and even more difficult to delineate.¹ Like Kantian reason it depicts actors as intellectually rational beings, but it imprints an extra temporal element on intellectuality at the same time. Analogously to utilitarian reason it is preoccupied with the maximization of interest, but it simultaneously emphasizes the role of morality and insists that the problem of ethics is constituted in the margin of every political decisions. In a similar manner to axiological reason it views actors as bounded by sociological games and rules, but it contextualizes these sociological games within a specifically chronological background.

What is this historical reason, after all? It is generally speaking a trinity. First, historical reason conceives of rationality as immanent rather than transcendent, specific rather than universal. It rejects the transcendental meaning given to human development and conceptualizes being as a series of temporal sequences rather than isolated abstract existence. Human beings and states *are*, neither because of their intellectual capacity, nor because of their interest maximization identity, but because of what they *were* yesterday and what they *will be* tomorrow. Historical reason is rationality *in* history, not rationality *of* history. Historical reason considers history as a process, not as a purpose. As Martin Wight scrupulously distinguishes between the two, the rationality in history, represented by Meinecke's "historicism", believes "that all values are historically conditioned, that reality itself is a historical process, and that history can teach nothing except philosophical acceptance of change". The rationality of history, exemplified in Popper's charge of Marx, Spengler and Toynbee,

¹ I have benefited from the following sources when trying to do so: Aron 1957: 57, Ortega y Gasset 1986.

believes that “history has a purpose and direction” and “its movement is largely predictable, and that it can (under proper interpretation) teach everything we need to know about life and prescribe our duties”.² Whereas the rationality of history points to rhythms, iron laws and recurrent patterns of history, the rationality *in* history conversely directs towards a constantly changing process from one specific space-time to another. Indeed, it is precisely because of this understanding of rationality as *in* history, as I shall show below, that the historical-rational thinkers tend aesthetically to define the “real”, “precise” and “accurate” as looking closer at the historically specific (past, the present, and the future) rather than as projecting sweeping generalization to it.

Second, the language of historical reason is one of (practical) morality. It regards morality as integral to and inseparable from political interest, and accordingly argues that ethics resides both in the heart and margin of every political action. For historical-rational thinkers, there is no morality as such, but rather praxeology, political morality, unity between utility and justice and the intersection of power and ethics. Political acts are not performed in a moral vacuum; rather, the calculation of power and interest, the end and means of political behavior, have all been constituted as well as regulated by moral concerns.

Third, historical reason contemplates moral problems in a special way: moral problems, which are rooted in specifically historical sociological circumstance, can neither be repudiated in their significance, nor resolved by universalizing a particular moral code. Instead, they must be tackled by returning to and finding solutions within specific historical-sociological conditions. Hence the orators of historical reason have constantly spoken of overcoming extremes such as “Machiavellianism” and “Kantianism”, “Empirical Realism” and “Universal Moral Order”, “instrumental” and “normative”. The *via media* can be found only within the historical process itself.

² M. Wight 1960: 224. Also contrast M. Wight 1958a with 1958b, two reviews of two separate conceptions of *Historismus* viewed by Friedrich Meinecke and Karl Popper.

In light of this definition, many would question whether this abstruse conception of rationality, which sounds so alien to Anglophone thought, had ever been present? My answer is affirmative, although the language first requires excavation from the deeply layered historical ground. In the following section, I reconstitute four individual speakers who exemplify historical reason: Raymond Aron's reasonable diplomatic-strategic action, Martin Wight's Rationalism, David Boucher's tradition of historical reason, and finally Christian Reus-Smit's thought of "rationality as a culturally and historically contingent form of consciousness".

In section (i), I shall concentrate on Raymond Aron's account of "reasonable" diplomatic-strategic action which has been set out in his *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (1966), an English translation of the original *Paix et Guerre Entre les Nations*, 1962.³ As one of the leading sociologists, philosophers of history and political commentators, Raymond Aron's international thought has had an enormous impacts on the Anglo-American intellectual world.⁴ Yet as time passed, Aron's theory of international relations was gradually left aside, marginalized and forgotten. For later IR scholars, Aron is only renowned for his introduction of historical sociology into the field. (Fred Halliday, one of the leading historical sociologists, has commented on Aron's works with enormous admiration, lauding the latter for pioneering the whole enterprise in IR.⁵) Few discuss, however, Aron's work nowadays and fewer still look back over what he once said about the "reasonable" criterion of political conduct. Indeed, one might ask, why do I labor on excavating his forgotten language of the "reasonable" and what deserves to be known?

For two reasons. First, it is only when IR scholars have contemplated how to have a "conception of reason beyond positivistic *episteme*" that they have

³ More of Aron's works will be entailed as auxiliary devise for clarification, such as his extremely influential article "What is a Theory of International Relations?" (1967), which is summative of *Peace and War*, and *The Great Debate: Theories of Nuclear Strategy* (1962).

⁴ Aron had already been famous as a leading French intellectual in the English speaking countries for *The Century of Total War* (1954), *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (1955), and other works, well before his *Peace and War* (1966). The reception of *Peace and War*, see, esp. Tucker 1965.

⁵ Halliday 1990: 137-41, 2002: 244-6.

returned to the classical Realists for inspiration.⁶ And Raymond Aron, they find out, not only frequently brings “reason to bear on political judgment” but with sophistication and with profound differences from other Realists such as Hans Morgenthau.⁷ These differences, as I shall show in section (i), are typical characteristics of historical rationality that distinguish Aron’s and Morgenthau’s conceptions of reason: a reasonable action is conducted under concrete historical-sociological conditions with normative orientation. For Aron, a reasonable action is not a repudiation of the calculation of power or interest at all. Rather, it is a measurement that grounds actions within specific historical-sociological circumstances, thereby enabling the calculation of power and interest to be synthesized with morality into a whole that in turn capacitates the actor to overcome the dualistic dilemmas of “Machiavellism” and “Kantianism”. Second, this historically-rational “reasonableness” does not merely have theoretical value. In its historical origin, the criterion of reasonable action was orchestrated by Aron himself to combat the “rational” deterrence theorists *and* Morgenthau’s “rational” Realism, both of which he saw as preposterous in theory and pernicious in guiding practice in the thermonuclear age. Both assumed the calculation of interest (utility) and power as deterministic for political conduct, both of which are too abstract, simplistic and hazardous in a bipolar, heterogeneous and nuclear system. For Aron, reasonableness provides a better praxeological solution to the early Cold War dilemma. Contrary to our usual practice, I shall occasionally bring Stanley Hoffmann’s several expository essays into the main texts, both because of Hoffmann’s fame as *the* exponent of Aron’s international thought and because of his “Aronian” impacts on the discipline.⁸

Martin Wight, one of the most prominent English School thinkers, once extolled that Aron’s achievement in *Peace and War* was comparable to that of

⁶ Neufeld 1995: 46, emphasis in original.

⁷ Davis 2008: 648.

⁸ Many theorists read Hoffmann’s *The State of War* (1965a) and *Janus and Minerva* (1987) where Aron’s thoughts are expounded and advocated.

Hobbes's and Locke's contribution to political theory, and Adam Smith's contribution to economics.⁹ What moved the scholarly-aristocratic Wight to praise Aron in these terms? At first appearance, it seems that their shared conception of the rational, provides an initial answer.

In section (ii), I turn to Wight's conception of "Rationalism", one of the three most significant Rationalisms within IR (besides Morgenthau and Keohane) but which remains relatively underexposed. I want to question what/where is the rational delivered by Rationalism. Is Wight's Rationalism a philosophical theory that attributes the source of knowledge to the human intellect, as Dunne claims? Or is it a tradition appointing international society as "the flagship idea of English School" that carves out a "clearly *bounded* subject" focused on the society of states, as Buzan instead insists? Is it a sort of political theory of constitutionalism that puts "rational" constraint on extremities in its central place and privileges the *via media*, as Hall argues? Or is it a garbage category replete with too many muddled contents to be delineates?¹⁰

In reply, I scrutinize Wight's main works published between 1957 and 1960, represented by the "mature" Wight's lectures and articles centered on international theory which were later published as *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (1957-1960, released 1991), "Why Is There No International Theory" (1959), and *Four Seminal Thinkers* (1959-1960, published in 2004).¹¹ I confine myself within works of this period because they provide abundant instances of Wight's *own* conception. And the answer I tease out is that the Rationalism viewed by Wight is an exemplar of historical reason, an ensemble that entails all these elements mentioned by his interpreters in a complex and *inextricable* way. The tradition of Rationalism is defined by a particular conception of reason as engendering a paradoxical view of human nature that

⁹ M. Wight 1967b.

¹⁰ See respectively Dunne 1998: 59-60, Buzan 2004: 1 emphasis added, I. Hall 2014: 13-4, Yost 1994.

¹¹ Wight scholars noticed that that some significant changes in Wight's thought occurred between the late 1940s and early 1950s, see e.g. Bull 1977: 10, Dunne 1998: 49-54, I. Hall 2006: 24 ff. My focus here is on these de-religious writings on international thought.

presupposes the possibility of a society, a belief in history as agnostic, and finally an acknowledgement of the necessity of a “political morality” that is historically and sociologically conditioned. Like Aron’s reasonableness, Wight’s Rationalism (in which the concept of reason lies at its heart) functions as an epitome of historical rationality. Both Aron and Wight construe political problem as originating in the historical-sociological process. Both regard moral problems as being inherent in every political action. Both speak of the terminology of Machiavellian and Kantian. Both argue that the human moral predicament is rooted in a historical context and cannot be resolved either by a Machiavellian or a Kantian method (either as meaningless or universal) but only within the historical process itself through concrete political action.

To clarify, my aim is *not* to pin down Wight’s own position within the three traditions, a problem which remains contentious, but to stop at a clear delineation of the historical-rational trait of his Rationalism and to thereby be satisfied with highlighting this underappreciated dimension.¹² This historical-rational dimension has been seriously overlooked, even by David Boucher who criticized Wight heavily in his enormously influential *Political Theories of International Relations* (1998). In the third section, I shall endeavor to show that the tradition of “historical reason” pioneered by Boucher, far from being a distinctly novel category, is in fact an instantiation of historical reason that closely resembles Aron’s reasonable praxeology and Wight’s Rationalism. Like Aron and Wight before him, Boucher argues that the Machiavellian and Kantian (Boucher renames them respectively “empirical realism” and “universal moral order”) answers provided by political thinkers to the problem of international history, sociology and morality are as violently procrustean in formal categorization as they are inadequate in content. The tradition of historical reason, which he places in between the two extremes, is one that will try to synthesize utility and justice into the same historical-sociological process.

¹² Bull (1972: 107-8) thought that Wight’s position transcends and goes around the three categories; I. Hall (2014) considered it as grounded solidly in *via media*.

Having examined Boucher I shall finally turn to Christian Reus-Smit. I reexamine his proposition that rationality is “a historically and culturally contingent form of consciousness”,¹³ a central theme which emerges from his works that were published in the late 1990s. These included works such as *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations* (1999), “The Strange Death of Liberal International Theory” (2001) and “The Idea of History and History with Ideas” (2002).¹⁴ Reus-Smit is counted in here on two accounts. First, I propose to bring explicitly out that in resembling Aron, Wight and Boucher, Reus-Smit’s argument of rationality as “historically and culturally contingent” and “embedded” within a historical, sociological and moral condition,¹⁵ is another exemplar of historical reason. Second, I want to show how Reus-Smit employed his historically-contingent rationality to expand the conceptual space of historical reason. Distinguishing himself from the Neo-Neo theorists *and* Constructivists (Katzenstein, Wendt and to a lesser degree Ruggie), Reus-Smit contends that rationality, if envisaged as a historically, sociologically and morally changing consciousness, will provide a penetrating standpoint that discloses how certain beliefs can serve as foundations not only for entitling actors to rightfulness and rightness of conduct, but for enabling the actors (*and* the system they form) to *be* in the very first place. Hence in Reus-Smit’s conception, rationality as historically contingent is more than revealing the historical-sociological condition under which acts are performed with a normative orientation. It rather penetrates into historical-sociological *pre*conditions of how actors exist and are organized in a system. Indeed, this constitutive-colored conception of historical reason evidently goes further than the mere unity between justice and utility.

Three caveats should be established before proceeding. First, with the exception of Aron, who speaks of historical rationality in an exhortative tone, all

¹³ Reus-Smit 1999: 161

¹⁴ Reus-Smit 1999, 2001, 2002. More materials will be involved and reconsidered below.

¹⁵ Reus-Smit 2002: 121, 1999: 161.

the other thinkers consider that their historical rationality is a descriptive characteristic of the “thought” possessed by statesman/intellectuals *themselves*. It is a feature that coincides with the “ruling idea” that *de facto* guides the actors’ actions. Yet for Wight, Boucher and Reus-Smit, historical rationality *should* also form the basis for political conduct. Hence when they speak of the language of historical rationality, one can discern that they are speaking the language both in a descriptive and (subsequently) exhortative tone.¹⁶ Second, the thinkers of historical reason often speak of eschewing a “Kantian” and a “Machiavellian” solution to political problems. The “Kantian” they refer to is both larger and smaller than my Kantian conception of reason. It is smaller because their “Kantian” usually stands for the chase of moral code at the expense of interest, whereas my “Kantian” considers that both the pursuits of interest and of morality can be unified if conduct is based on the intellect. It is larger because their “Kantian” can include nationalistic or racist doctrines, which are irrational negations of the Kantian conception of *reason*. Third, the term “historical-sociological” (small h and r) needs to be distinguished from the “Historical-Sociological” (large H and R) advocated by J.M. Hobson and others as the theories inspired by Charles Tilly and Michael Mann.

(i) Reasonable Action in Thermonuclear Age: Raymond Aron (and Stanley Hoffmann)

Rationality in Deterrence Theory and Morgenthau’s “Realism”

In his development of *Peace and War* (1966) Aron provides a constant contrast with the two celebrated notions of rationality in his time: Morgenthau’s rational Realism and the deterrence theories. For Aron, both approaches are deficient

¹⁶ For Wight, Boucher and Reus-Smit, historical rationality is a property manifested in the actors’ (statesmen or thinker) conduct and thought, and later highlighted or revealed by IR scholars. In the case of Aron, the praxeological is quite normative but it is *not* normative to such an extent that it requires the transcendence of historical-sociological conditions (but only transformation within them).

to the extent that they obliterate the concretely historical and the socio-moral. First, both endeavor to impose a distantly abstract model on the real world. To begin *Peace and War* with (a critique of) Morgenthau's metaphor of theory as an essentialist portrait, Aron questioned:

“What are the ‘rational elements’ of international politics? Is it enough to consider merely the rational elements, in order to produce a sketch or paint a portrait in accord with the model's essence? If the theoretician replies negatively to these two questions, he must take another path, that of sociology. Granted the goal – to sketch the map of the international scene – the theoretician will attempt to retain *all* the elements instead of fixing his attention on the rational ones alone”.¹⁷

The attempt to capture *the* rational element – the pursuit of interest as power – is bound to fail. States, living in different social condition that varies internationally as well as domestically, must have a “plurality of concrete objectives and of ultimate objectives” other than the constricted one of power in their pursuit.¹⁸ The rational deterrence theorists also succumb to this error. Aron accordingly questioned the “portrait” of deterrence in his *The Great Debate: Theories of Nuclear Strategy* (1963):

“The entire American theory is based on rationality; it attempts to reconstruct the manner in which a strategist would behave if, like his hypothetical counterpart in economic theory, he were both intelligent and well-informed. But how many real-life chiefs of state resemble this idealized portrait? How many of them are always able to abide by the dictates of reason, at least reason defined by the theoreticians?”¹⁹

¹⁷ Aron 1966: 3, emphasis in original.

¹⁸ Aron 1967: 91.

¹⁹ Aron 1963: 61-2.

For Aron, the idea of rationality presented in Morgenthau and the deterrence theorists' "idealized portrait" are too crude to reveal the essence of politics. They are exceedingly schematic, unrealistic, and amoral. In Morgenthau's case, the conceptualization of political action as adjusting available power to certain end is far from adequate for comprehending political conduct. Political collectivities pursue a range of objectives and not all of them can be comprehended as schemed by reason (the intellect). A sociological analysis, in Aron's view, could provide a comprehensive dissection of how objectives, not only including the one designated by reason but "the nature of the passions, the follies, the ideas and the violence of the century", might come into play.²⁰ For Aron, Hoffmann interpreted, to understand political conduct one could not proceed by trying to grasp *the* rationality of action, but to question "what kind of rationality" that might be entailed. Would it be "the quest for power, the achievement of the national interest, or the maintenance of the present international system"?²¹

In the case of deterrence theorists, this schematic nature becomes more evident. They are comfortable to discuss rational strategies within "a mere schematic game that can be usefully described in abstract terms as if the players were x, y z" rather than "a game in which the players are located in time and in space and are neither geographically nor sociologically interchangeable".²² Aron enunciated the distinction between the schematic games and the "diplomatic-strategic games in the historical world". Whereas the former is one shot, the latter is played by statesmen indeterminately and incessantly. Whereas the former has clear payoff and certainty in view, it always seems to the latter that the cost or benefit of a move is unclear, that the "stakes and the limits" are uncertain, and that the win and loss cannot be judged

²⁰ Aron 1966: 600.

²¹ Hoffmann 1961: 12-3.

²² Hoffmann 1965a: ix.

instantaneously. Anticipating K.M. Fierke's theory of "changing games", Aron emphasizes that the games in the historical world have been lively and concrete, played one round after another, transformed from one to another.²³ "Game theory cannot be the theory of international relations any more than Morgenthau's theory of power", as Hoffmann recapitulated neatly, since "international political action...looks more like a series of gambles than a chain of rigorous calculations".²⁴

As a corollary of being schematic, the error of being unrealistic is committed by both Morgenthau and the deterrence theorists. For Aron, Morgenthau is a utilitarian-rational theorist of power. His notion that rationality in a calculative sense can determine political conduct is too economic to operate. The games designed by the deterrence theorists are viewed by Aron as more evidently guilting of this mistake. Using Gellen Snyder's example explained in chapter two, Aron argued that

"the cost and gain of a war are not susceptible of rigorous evaluation. One can calculate the losses and the advantages, in lives and material resources, of the belligerents. [...] But what value can either of the super powers attribute to the fact of being rid of the threat embodied by the other? [...] The irrationality of war in relation to expenditure and gain results from a true but vague sentiment or else from the substitution of an economic calculation for a political one".²⁵

Even if it is granted that a calculated deterrence is valid on its own merits, it is still conceivable that "calculation" and "deterrence" could be overthrown by political confrontation. The calculation of the cost, benefits and probabilities of attack, even if in a nuclear age, cannot substitute for the political contestation

²³ Aron 1966: 771-4.

²⁴ Hoffmann 1965: 30.

²⁵ Aron 1966: 439.

of wills that frequently override the cold-headed consideration of quantitative consequences, which can lead to the outbreak of a nuclear war. It is simply an economistic fallacy to consider politics as solely about using efficient means to achieve a prefixed political end as if the calculation of utility can determine states' actions.²⁶ If "statesmen and peoples had acted according to economic rationality" the Great War in 1914 would never have taken place.²⁷

What also causes Aron's grave apprehension is that Morgenthau as well as the deterrence theorists appear less aware of their offering of a moral choice (at least in Aron's own view). Morgenthau, in Aron's view, fails to recognize the potential hazard that his intangible model of Realism may be used as an instrument to discipline reality. Incautiously or unconsciously, the intellectual conceptualization of national interest as power will be transformed into a "crusading realism", a normatively zealous ideal, a sheer polemic "against ideologies of perpetual peace, international law, Christian or Kantian morality".²⁸ Nor do the deterrence theorists realize this underlying issue. They do not realize the normative implication of their theories on the statesmen, which actually demands the latter to be intelligent, well-informed and subject to the dictates of reason (rather than to emotional reaction). For both of them, the concern with morality is neither realized nor made explicit. Yet the issue of moral judgment should occupy an avowedly central position within a conception of reason. "Aron thinks", Hoffmann explained, "that foreign-policy actions can be more or less reasonable, but reasonable and rational are not synonymous. The definition of what is reasonable entails value judgments in addition to the calculation of forces". Rationality is about the calculation of power/utility, but reasonableness involves a richer consideration in normative consequences. It is due to this enhanced criterion of political conduct that neither the theory of

²⁶ Aron 1966: 438-9.

²⁷ Aron 1966: 275.

²⁸ Aron 1966: 599.

power politics (Aron termed Machievillism) nor the one of universal ideals (Kantianism) is satisfactory.

Aron's criticism of Morgenthau and Rational Deterrence Theories is acute and penetrating. True, his criticism of Morgenthau is sometimes unjustified. Morgenthau is no less a fervent critic of the deterrence theories than Aron himself, who has pointed out the bankruptcy of calculation of interest in nuclear deterrence and the endangerment of the ultimate end of using nuclear weapons (as I have shown in chapter one).²⁹ Morgenthau, understanding the moral consequence of theory very well, also protested against Aron's misrepresentation of his theory as a rational Realist ideology because of the latter's failure to understand the working of *standortgebunden* (Mannheim's notion).³⁰ Yet despite these unjustified criticisms, Aron's approach is driven by his apprehension that the statesmen's actions *cannot* be appraised, let alone guided, simply by the inducement of power or incentive of utility. For Aron, the rationality envisaged by Morgenthau and Rational Deterrence Theories is too distant, constricted and demoralized. What is demanded is not to undertake a transcendent investigation in which, as Hoffmann puts it, "what is rational to the theorists may not be rational to the actor, for their frames of references are not identical". Rather, one must immerse into the historically specific, entering into the actor's own world, undertaking a detailed historical reconstruction of the necessity, contingency and complexity surrounded the actor's action.³¹ Indeed, it is this historical, sociological and moral value added by Aron onto reason that distinguishes his work so profoundly from other classic Realists (as I had forewarned in chapter one).

²⁹ Morgenthau (1962: 101) echoed Aron's open letter to Kennedy during the Cuba Missile Crisis.

³⁰ See Morgenthau's (1967b: 1111-2) review of *Peace and War*. Morgenthau, who should have known very well Aron's mastery of Mannheim's theory of ideology (as early as in Aron 1936: 57 ff.), explained to the latter that his theory had been used for justifying a particular policy: "For all political philosophy is "standortgebunden" that is, it arises out of a concrete political situation with which it tries to come intellectually to terms in a new and meaningful fashion. Because it does this, it is bound to be used by certain groups within the political situation as a rationalization and justification of a particular political position, that is, as ideology". Here Morgenthau is clarifying that he is cautious of Realism as a moral choice for conducting American foreign policy in a particular way (e.g. economizing the use of power), but it is later abused instead as a justification for abusing power.

³¹ Richard Rosecrance (1963 8), who was also impacted by Aron in this aspect, stated neatly in his *Action and Reaction in World Politics* that "homogeneous international behavior is a chimera".

Raymond Aron's "Reasonable" Diplomatic-Strategic Action

In a sharp contrast to both Morgenthau's Realism and the Rational Deterrence Theories, Aron articulates another criterion than the one of calculation (either of Morgenthau's power or of Deterrence's utility) to appraise political action. This criterion as "reasonable", explicated in Aron's momentous *Peace and War*, is signposted in his famously fourfold, categorical, scheme.³²

The *theoretical* conceptualizes a domain distinct from the numerous manifolds of reality. International politics, instead of being defined in analogy to economics as the calculation of power and utility, is marked out as a Weberian "absence of an entity that holds a monopoly of legitimate violence". Within such an anarchical terrain, states can legitimately employ force and diplomacy, namely undertaking "strategic-diplomatic action", to advance their own wellbeing.³³ A *sociological* investigation then searches for the formally causal relations within the realm. The collectivities' diplomatic-strategic action is always in a process of being conditioned by such internal variables as ideological (emotional) convictions, regime types, demographical characteristics, and external (systematic) ones as bipolarity or multipolarity, homogeneity or heterogeneity.³⁴ These sociological inquiries will in turn be subjected to *historical* scrutiny. International political action cannot be explained either exclusively or transcendently as the movement of power (or utility), because "the course of international relations" is "eminently historical, in all senses of the term: its changes are incessant; its systems are diverse and fragile; it is affected by all economic, technical, and moral transformations".³⁵ Finally the *praxeological* designates the possible diplomatic-strategic action in

³² Other scholar, who inherits and still uses this fourfold structural logic of inquiry, is Linklater (see Linklater 1992, 1998). As we shall see below, Reus-Smit will also locate his own work within this schematic map.

³³ Aron 1967: 192, 1966:5.

³⁴ Aron 1966: 178.

³⁵ Aron 1967: 205.

light of such enquiry for the future.³⁶ *Contra* the Deterrence theorists (as if their utilitarian calculation is morally neutral), a reasonable conduct presupposes in itself a normative theory of how strategic-diplomatic actions should be undertaken. It requires political conduct to overcome the dualistic dilemma between “moral platitudinizing” and “conservative cynicism”, between “Kantianism” and “Machievillism”, by eschewing the two extremes, exactly like Wight’s Rationalism that is extolled to walk through a middle ground between “Revolutionism” and “Realism”.³⁷

Located within such a scheme, reasonable political action turns out to be nothing but an act under a specifically historical-sociological condition with a normative orientation. It is a conduct of diplomatic-strategic action with both historical, sociological, and moral problems in view. For Aron, reasonable action as a criterion is superior to any “rational” counterpart in dualistic senses.

First, it triumphs over the constricted idea of calculation not by abandoning it but by complicating political judgment. As Aron explicitly articulated: “Diplomatic-strategic action, like technological action, can be reasonable only on condition that it is calculating”; “it is reasonable insofar as it calculates risk”.³⁸ A strategic-diplomatic action is never reasonable and never could be, was it not oriented at all towards calculating power, interests and risks. And calculation, far from being based on abstract terms such as utility, is grounded in the historically specific. To use Mahoney’s terms, it is grounded “in a recognition of the structure of human history” and “statesmanlike prudence”.³⁹ It replaces the abstractness of rational models by bridging the gap between the rational “scheme and the historical world”.⁴⁰ “To be prudent”, in Aron’s own terms, is “to act in accordance with the particular situation and the concrete data”.⁴¹ In its

³⁶ Aron himself (1967: 189, fn.3) professed later that the term “praxeology” might have been too abstruse to be accepted in the Anglo-American world. Yet, the term has become too well-known nowadays to demand further explanation (see above, Chapter one, section (iii) on Linklater, and below on Reus-Smit).

³⁷ Aron 1966: 577 ff.

³⁸ Aron 1966: 635, 10.

³⁹ Mahoney 1992: 89.

⁴⁰ Aron 1966: 776.

⁴¹ Aron 1966: 585.

cause, and from a concretely historical-sociological point of view, the Cold War is characterized by the nuclear dilemma and the establishment of a heavily heterogeneous system. It is the first time that nuclear weapons become an employable means for conducting diplomatic-strategic action. With the breakdown of the old European and colonialist states system, there forms an international society dominated by two non-European superpowers, and “the rest of the world reinforces the paradoxical character of the relation between the blocs which in all reason must not fight each other to the death and which cannot come to agreement”.⁴² In the case of deterrence, historical-sociological investigation shows a more complex conception of deterrence is needed than one envisaged by the rational deterrence theorists. It not only requires the satisfaction of quantitative demand (how many missiles are needed to wipe out fifty percent of American bomber bases?), not only the consideration of whether the opponent is a reasonable being (is the other as intelligent as the self, or emotionally committed, or an automaton pictured by the Deterrence theorists?), but also the consideration of the possibly risky reactions influenced by the domestic institutions (what would the Soviets do in the Berlin Crisis?).

Second, within such a predicament, how could the superpowers, or the handful of men who are responsible for making decisions, act towards each other in a way that neither sacrifices interest at the expense of morality, nor the opposite? What is, then, a reasonable diplomatic-strategic action in the praxeological sense?

From a praxeological point of view, it is reasonable to act on the “ethics of responsibility” rather than on the “ethics of conviction”,⁴³ *and* to gradually resolve the dilemma that is generated by, and can only solved within, the specific historical-sociological structure. The foremost problem is not to prevent the use of violence, as the theorists of Kantianism believe, nor as the Machiavellians proclaimed, to act belligerently. To make peace by disarmament,

⁴² Aron 1966: 372.

⁴³ Aron 1966: 634-5.

like Russell and Noel-Baker propose, is impracticable and can only induce more violence. To use a “Catonian” strategy such as massive retaliation devised by McNamara will make the use of violence pointless since the ultimate objective is to dismantle the Soviet communist regime.⁴⁴ Rather, a reasonable choice is to constrain violence. Within the superpower struggles and the possibility of a nuclear war, the calculation of power and interest must be subordinated to the consideration of the destruction of human beings between rival states. “The primacy of policy”, cautioned Aron, “permits the control of escalation, the avoidance of an explosion of animosity into passionate and unrestricted brutality”; and “the *reasonable* conduct of politics is the only rational one if the goal of the intercourse among states is the survival of all, common prosperity, and the sparing of the people’s blood”.⁴⁵ True, there is no guarantee that the opponent will necessarily share this conviction, taking the survival of both into account and not being carried away by fury or by the escalation of conflict itself. Nevertheless, the statesman must endeavor to restrain their own employment of violence, hoping that the opponent’s “reaction will be reasonable” so as also to limit violence within a certain boundary.⁴⁶ Aron’s stipulation that such a reasonable action to limit violence through historical-sociological specific means must be viewed as itself rooted in, or unfolded through, the historical process is of particular importance:

“Reasonable and not rational, a diplomatic-strategy, in the thermonuclear age and in the age of ideologies, confronts leaders and mere citizens with moral antinomies still more agonizing than those of the past. [...] The contradiction between morality and politics, says the philosopher who observes past history with the detachment of a sage, is not as Friedrich Meinecke, the analyst of the *raison d’état*, describes it. Morality, too, is born

⁴⁴ Aron 1966: 643-76.

⁴⁵ Aron 1966: 45.

⁴⁶ Aron 1966: 615-6, 635.

in history, has been developed through time. It is the very progress of our moral conceptions which leads us to judge severely the practices of states and gradually to transform them. It is in the concrete morality of the collectivities that universal morality is realized – however imperfectly. And it is in and by politics that concrete moralities are achieved.”⁴⁷

As Martin Wight’s subsequent emphasis on a “political morality”, Aron highlights the implication of the reasonable strategic-diplomatic conduct that “it is in and by politics that concrete moralities are achieved”. Whereas the Machiavellians pursue the *raison d’état* at the expense of morality, and whereas the Kantians sacrifice political, “national”, interest to universal morality, a reasonable conduct will synthesize politics and morality in the concrete historical process and through political practice accomplish the task. The reasonable, in its nature, is neither a personal morality universalized nor a morality of the state: it is a criterion – as Wight once called “political morality” – that resolves the confrontation of “leaders and mere citizens with moral antinomies”. And it is historically ingrained: morality is rooted in a historical process in which the moral predicaments are solved and transformed by the successive generations of human beings.

The historical-sociological soil, in which Aron rooted his thought, is a margin between superpower belligerent confrontation and mutual nuclear destruction. Hoffmann once remarked that in Aron’s own view, “the search for a thoroughly rational policy is both a mistake and a delusion”. And he went on: “in the game of international politics, whose objectives are multiple and whose rules are uncertain, there may be *reasonable* politics and *unreasonable* ones”, but “the game itself, because of nuclear weapons, has become unreasonable”.⁴⁸ What is needed, for Aron, is a reasonable conduct in an unreasonable game. The

⁴⁷ Aron 1966: 780-1.

⁴⁸ Hoffmann 1962: 178. By “unreasonable” Hoffmann refers to the fact that the bipolar confrontation and nuclear dilemma is pushing the international political game towards a point of the very negation of humanity and sociality.

calculation of power and interest is indispensable for political action, but the abstractly economistic calculation fails to grasp both the specific historical-sociological circumstances (when the international game itself becomes unreasonable), and the demand for a solution which overcomes both the moral predicament and the political risk (a move that is reasonable).

Reasonableness and Human Being as Historical Existence

From an intellectually biographical point of view, Raymond Aron's prescription of a reasonable diplomatic-strategic action in *Peace and War* is but a manifestation of his long-standing philosophical foundation and political experience.⁴⁹ It is a projection of his entrenched belief, laid down as early as in his *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (1938) to the terrain of international relations. As Reed Davis exposes, it is Aron's view of reason as antinomic and dialectic that makes the ultimate distinction from Morgenthau's way of bearing "rationality" on political judgment.⁵⁰

What Davis fails to clarify, however, is how Aron's antinomic conception of reason can be distinguished from Morgenthau's similarly antinomic conception, which I established in chapter one. Let me try to bring out two important distinctions here. Had these distinctions been exposed, the historical nature of Aron's reasonableness can be more clearly delineated, in a manner which also paves the way for an illuminating comparison with Wight's Rationalism.

The first distinction is Aron's view of men as *ultimately* historical beings. Whereas for Morgenthau the antinomy of reason is generated by the multidimensional ways of existence, it is for Aron a quality caused by the temporal disjunction between the man in the past and the man in the future.

⁴⁹ In his *Memoir*, Aron recalled that when he wanted to warn against the upcoming, apocalyptic, repercussions of a Nazi regime in Germany, he was informed by an undersecretary of foreign affairs in the Quai d'Orsay that "The Minister of Foreign Affairs is a very exceptional person and he enjoys much authority. The moment is propitious of any initiative. But what would you, who have spoken to me so well about Germany and the dangers which are looming, do if you were in his place?", cited in Schils 1985: 162.

⁵⁰ Davis 2008.

That man is a historical being renders his action historical, where reasonableness as an attribute of action also becomes so. Yet what is “historical” for Aron? It means, first, that the past has been encapsulated in space and time and cannot be changed. Second, “action begins by accepting the conditions fundamental to all politics” where the conditions are “peculiar to a given time”. To perform an act in the present is to confront the structural (sociological) precondition and to “find one’s place in a movement which transcend the individual”. Third, action “consents to the uncertainty of the future”, which renders the act previously made in the present responsible for its repercussions.⁵¹

Second, the criterion of reasonableness is rooted in this threefold, historical, characteristic. Reasonableness is antinomic, *not* because of the interplay between the passionate, the moral, and the religious (along the dimension of the spheres), but because it is at once embedded in the interplay of the past, present and future dimensions (along the dimension of temporality). For Aron, to be “truly rational” and the representative of “true reason” – recall Morgenthau’s proclamation – is to undertake actions with historical, sociological, and praxeological, issues in view. “Historical man”, stated Aron, “belongs to a collectivity and participates in reason”: human beings are historical existences; they have lived in and through the concretely historical world in which they undertake diplomatic-strategic action in a far more sociologically complex manner than the simple calculation of power or utility; their activities are amenable to the improvement of humanity. Indeed, that human beings are reasonable does not necessarily guarantee that the outcomes will be reasonable and that the nuclear catastrophe can be eschewed under the bipolar, thermonuclear age.⁵² Yet, there must be a hope that man, especially the statesman, will behave reasonably in their designation of the diplomatic-strategic conduct. They can participate in reason, transform the collectivities

⁵¹ Aron 1938: 329.

⁵² Aron 1966: 339; see also Davis 2008: 652.

and the international systems, solve their problems in history, and realize their moral commitment towards humanity in their political practices. The dilemma of “war impossible, peace impracticable” can be overcome by such a reasonable conduct. Both Morgenthau’s statement for a “rational” theory of American foreign policy and the “rational” deterrence theories, indeed, shock him as misleading and morally precarious.

Unfortunately, Aron’s advocate for a reasonable conduct of diplomatic-strategic action has long been neglected by other later IR theorists. The most evident case here is David Boucher’s discernment of a tradition of “historical reason”: in his splendid study of the three traditions within *Political Theories of International Relations* (1998), Boucher urged for the recognition of one tradition that synthesizes both Realistic and Idealistic characteristics, and provides “a standard of conduct in terms of which the rationality of the action of states could be judged...to be found in the historical process”.⁵³ Does not this conception of rationality as residing *in* the historical process – which views that “human nature is not a fixed entity” and “human beings have developed their characters and natures over time, and within the context of historical societies”; that “rational state action escapes the mere immediacy of self-interest and expediency, while at the same time avoid conforming to abstract principles which appear to stand above”; that both *raison d’état* and the universal moral principles are inadequate⁵⁴ – bear remarkable resemblance to Aron’s reasonableness?

In the next section, I shall turn to a similar conception of reason by Wight that, in spite of its emphasis on the historically-sociologically changeable, is still misunderstood as a “tradition” that wants to transcend history.

(ii) Martin Wight and “Rationalism”

⁵³ Boucher 1998: 37.

⁵⁴ Boucher 1991: 137-8.

International Theory: The Tradition of Rationalism 1957-1960

It was around the same time as Raymond Aron was laboring on his comprehensive treatise on international relations that Martin Wight was invited by Hans Morgenthau to assume the latter's teaching position and to lecture for a year (1956-7) on "international theory"⁵⁵ in the University of Chicago. Having returned to Britain in 1958, Wight continued his lectures at the LSE, spending next three years improving the lecture based on previous materials. On the basis of the same lectures, Wight also composed more than ten individual articles, some of which were devoted to the meeting of British Committee of International Relations Theory – including the famous "Why Is There No International Theory" (1959) that is claimed to deny the very meaningfulness of any moral questions in international politics. The lectures were finally published under Bull and Porter's successive editorships after three decades in 1991, under the title of *International Theory: The Three Traditions*. The special lectures on the international thought of Machiavelli and Grotius were recently released as *Four Seminal Thinkers* (2004). Two of Wight's most important essays had already been exhibited in *Diplomatic Investigation* (1966), a volume that not only published in the same times as the English translation of Aron's *Peace and War* but also lifted the curtain of the first act of the "English School" and brought Wight to the forestage.⁵⁶

Within these lectures and papers – principally in *International Theory* – Wight introduced three "traditions" or "patterns" of international thought: Realism (Machiavellian), Rationalism (Grotian), and Revolutionism (Kantian). Like Aron who invokes the names of Machiavellian and Kantian, Wight also labels the two extremes under the names of Machiavellian and Kantian with similar content. Like Aron who considers both extremes to be inadequate and contrives a

⁵⁵ By "international theory" M. Wight (1957-60: 1, 1959: 17) meant the "enquiry" or "speculation", "about relations between states".

⁵⁶ Butterfield & M. Wight 1966; an indispensable historiography see Dunne 1998.

middle ground called reasonable action, Wight also highlights a third category which stands in *via media* and calls it Rationalism.

Yet unlike Aron before him, Wight regards Rationalism as having a differentiated morphological form of existence. First, unlike Aron's reasonableness as a *criterion of conduct* grounded in historical-sociology with normative orientation, a *tradition* of Rationalism is a recurrent rhythm of *thought* that is behind/underlying a particular pattern of conduct.

Second, whereas Aron elaborates reasonableness within the fourfold scheme as if the four dimensions can exhaustively delineate the traits of action based on a historical-sociological-moral nexus, Wight considers that the tradition of Rationalism definitely contains, but is more than, these three traits. Instead, a tradition of Rationalism pervades many dimensions of thought, such as the conception of diplomacy, human nature, and international law (as I shall soon show).

Third, as often incurred disputes, is Wight's definition of tradition. Conventionally, IR scholars argue that Wight uses tradition in the same way as A.O. Lovejoy do (and Ernst Barker, I would add), as if a tradition is unchanged.⁵⁷ Or, as Hedley Bull declaimed, that under the heavy influences of Toynbee, "the whole emphasis of Martin Wight's works is on the elements of continuity in international relations rather than on the elements of change, and that references to contemporary events are only illustrations, not essential to the central theme".⁵⁸ Recent revisionist accounts show,⁵⁹ however, that Wight himself was very aware of the Procrustean effects of speaking of "traditions". "The purpose of building pigeon-holes", Wight cautioned, "is to reassure oneself that raw materials do *not* fit into them".⁶⁰ Furthermore, the three traditions are

⁵⁷ See e.g. Bull 1972, Dunne 1993.

⁵⁸ At least in Bull's (1972: 111, 1977: 9-10, Bull & Holbraad 1979: 9, 11) view, Wight's history is an incessant pursuit of transhistorical ideas and patterns. Stephen Hobden (2002: 52) once remarked that Wight "was perhaps the most historically minded of the English School writers" and Bull, "paradoxically, given his commitment to a 'classical approach' ... perhaps one of the least historically informed". Jackson (1996: 208-9) also touched on this point: "classical approach", which is used for "historicizing", was and ought to be "inclusive" (Wight) rather than "exclusive" (Bull) with modern social sciences.

⁵⁹ Clark 1996, Porter 2004: xxiii-vi, I. Hall 2006: 134-42.

⁶⁰ Wight 1957-1960: 259, emphasis in original.

not equally traditional, or not equally stable as units of a compound. Revolutionism, for instance, is deemed as “parricidal”, whereas the first two was claimed in an article as “indeed self-conscious intellectual traditions”. Hence the tradition of Rationalism, unlike Aron’s criterion, seems to be more dynamic and have more forms of existence: they may be at the same time intersecting with and even transmuting into other traditions.⁶¹

What then, is this tradition of *Rationalism*: a “broad middle road” sometimes “uncertainty wide” sometimes “disconcertingly narrow”, but nevertheless possible to discern with the sense of belonging and “with the most conscious acknowledgement of continuity”?⁶² What makes it unique in its “appeals to reason”?⁶³ To answer these questions, Wight does not provide an analytical, statist, reply, as Buzan asserts that Rationalism is “about the institutionalization of shared interest and identify among states, and puts the creation and maintenance of shared norms, rules and institutions at the center of IR theory”.⁶⁴ Rather, Wight’s answer is complex.⁶⁵ For Wight, Rationalism considers human (association’s) action to be based on an inextricably historical, sociological and moral nexus. Rationalism is distinct from the other two traditions by a particular conception of human nature as equipped with the rational capacity that leads to its threefold “flagship” notions: the human nature amenable to reason engenders the view of society as possible, of history as in a constant flux, and of moral concern as indispensable.

The first defining notion of Rationalism is its paradoxical or tensional view of human nature that evidences the possibility of sociality. Wight begins from the presupposition that “the doctrine of human nature provides the foundations for all political theory” which in turn gives rise to international theory as “the political philosophy of international relations”.⁶⁶ For the Rationalists, human beings are

⁶¹ My focus here is the tradition of *Rationalism* not the *tradition* of Rationalism. M. Wight 1960: 222, 225.

⁶² M. Wight 1957-1960: 14-5. By citing this statement I intend to clarify the importance of Rationalism for Wight rather than endorsing the interpretation of Wight as a solid Rationalist.

⁶³ M. Wight 1957-60: 29.

⁶⁴ Buzan 2004: 7.

⁶⁵ I have to confine my focus within Wight’s comments on the three dimensions.

⁶⁶ M. Wight 1957-60: 1, 99.

neither permanently dominated by uncontrollable sinful passions (Machiavellian), nor progressing towards a higher humanity under a self-consciousness of their nature (Kantians). Rather, Rationalism stands in between, and will “describe human nature in terms of a tension, and have to define it by a paradox”.⁶⁷ “Besides being a sinful, pugnacious and irrational animal”, Wight depicted the Rationalist view, “man is also rational”:⁶⁸ possessed with this rational faculty, human beings are as capable of doing the virtuous as committing the vicious. Like most of his contemporaries (see chapter one, section ii), Wight considered the rational faculty of man is indispensable for harnessing their emotions and impulses; but unlike the prevalently transcendent conception, Wight endowed it with a sociological color:

“the Machiavellian and Kantian agree that politics have their origin in sin; they believe in the Augustinian doctrine of the state as *‘poena et remedium peccati’*...The Machiavellian and Kantian agree in seeing politics as dominated by human rapacity and stupidity...In other words Machiavellians believe that the sinful nature of politics is unchangeable, Kantian believe it *can* be changed. Against both is the Grotian, who believes that political life is natural to man, and needed for his proper development.”⁶⁹

This rational man, as Aron’s “historical man”, presupposes a sociological potential in living a political life naturally with others and participating on reason for development. Rather than supposing government is the remedy for their sinful nature, the Rationalists regard “the art of government and the business of politics” as serving for “the security and comparative freedom of the rational man”.⁷⁰ Their rational capacity to do good enables them to anticipate that

⁶⁷ M. Wight 1957-60: 28.

⁶⁸ M. Wight 1957-60: 29, see also 13.

⁶⁹ M. Wight 1957-60: 161-2, emphasis in original.

⁷⁰ M. Wight 1957-60: 103.

“goodwill can evoke friendship and reciprocal goodwill; and that common interests can be found and from these co-operation will follow”.⁷¹ It gives rise to a belief in the “resoluble tension of interest”, an interest mediating between individuals and society.⁷² It is “the capacity to know this natural law and the obligations it imposes” that is both important for individuals to obey some common rules, assisting each other and punishing together the aggressor for maintaining “a true society”, and crucial for recognizing a society because of their existence and regulative functions.⁷³ This law in turn demands and relies on the balance of power, which rests itself on an idea of “collective interest” and “broadened meaning of security” that can be “enjoyed or pursued in common”, linking back to the governmental purpose (for the Rationalists, balance of power is the “unwritten constitution of international society”).⁷⁴ Indeed, the assumption of rational human nature is simple, but its impacts are tremendous: it implies an affirmative answer to the question of whether (international) society exists for the participation and proper development of the individuals (states), and constitutes an indispensable precondition for all these institutions (for instance, law, balance of power). For Wight, international society, far from being an analytical concept independent of moral considerations, is one that has already been presupposed in political theory. “The question of international society” is but “the modern expression of what used to be called the question of the state of nature”.⁷⁵

Second, the Rationalist belief in the rationality of man to participate in politics presupposes that human conduct can have development and cultivation in a historical sense. Thus “a theory of human nature”, Wight pointed out, “carries as its shadow, more or less clarified and acknowledged, a theory of history”.⁷⁶ The Machiavellians, regarding human nature as persistently

⁷¹ M. Wight 1957-60: 153-4

⁷² M. Wight 1957-60: 128-31.

⁷³ M. Wight 1957-60: 14, 38-9. Notice, for Wight, that Rationalism accepts *both* sources of law (cf. Hall 2014) – positivistic and natural – it is this that makes it Grotian.

⁷⁴ M. Wight 1961: 103.

⁷⁵ M. Wight 1957-60: 111, 165.

⁷⁶ I. Hall 2006: 43.

pugnacious, would view history as “static”, or “cyclical, the repetition of conquests, revolutions and defeats”. The Kantians, believing in a progressive *telos*, would conceive of it as “linear, moving upwards towards an apocalyptic denouement” or “the totality of mankind surging forward and individuals getting trampled underfoot”.⁷⁷ Rationalism, by contrast, neither condemns human nature and politics as permanently nasty, nor endeavors to transform them into an immediate moral kingdom, but expects that man can participate in reason and gradually transform his conduct in history. On the one hand, human nature is not a fixed entity, and indeed, “It is essential not to have faith in human nature”.⁷⁸ Nor does it, on the other, necessarily evolve towards a higher humanity as Kantians believe. Rather, because of man’s capability as a rational animal, he can behave as virtuously as viciously in history. The rational capacity does not enable man to transcend history, but it does ensure that he can transform history: it is through this rational dimension inherent in human nature as a “tension” or a “paradox” that history becomes changeable, developable, where human beings could both gradually cultivate reason to bring about social and moral transformation, and commit ferocious crimes.⁷⁹ Far from being a process parallel to a train passing through unreturnable stations – “Hitler was two stops back, and we didn’t get out thank goodness”⁸⁰ – history is remembered by vicissitude, the recurrence of tragedy, and the contingency in making political decisions. Hence Aron points to the “incessant change” of “economic, technical and moral transformations” in history, Wight’s Rationalism displays a dynamic conception of history that eludes abstract, timeless, laws. The Rationalists, Wight observed, “may be expected to be cautious and

⁷⁷ M. Wight 1957-1960: 29.

⁷⁸ The sentence “It is essential not to have faith in human nature” comes from Wight’s (1949) review of Butterfield’s *Christianity and History* (1949: 65), where it was cautioned, in one chapter entitled “Human Nature in History”, that the appeal to a permanent human nature as explanation of historical events must be abandoned, and “it must be emphasized that we create tragedy after tragedy for ourselves by a lazy unexamined doctrine of man which is current amongst us and which the study of history does not support”. Wight quoted the foregoing caveat but mistakenly added the sentence into the quotations which did not appear in Butterfield’s original work but which was, presumably, what Wight himself wanted to say.

⁷⁹ M. Wight 1957-60: 28-9.

⁸⁰ Cited from I. Hall 2006: 53.

agnostic”, and will “see history as a field in which individuals find their several purposes or meanings and are skeptical about the meaning of the whole; but at least they agree on a sense of history as dynamic, and the individual as having responsibility in it”.⁸¹ As Wight explained further by citing H.A.L. Fisher’s preface to *A History of Europe* (1935)

“The fact of progress is written large and plain on the page of history; but progress is not a law of nature. The ground gained by one generation may be lost by the next. The thoughts of men may flow into the channels which lead to disaster and barbarism”.⁸²

This dynamically historical dimension of human conduct simultaneously directs attention to the problem of human or moral dimension of history. Or, as Porter insightfully suggests, Wight stresses the obligation to understand “the moral dimension of the past”.⁸³ Indeed, if history is viewed as shaped by individuals’ practices, then the individuals will have to assume the responsibility of making history what it is. The acknowledgement of the historical agency – human nature as amenable to “proper development” rather than to the iron law of repetition or just waiting for transcendence – shows that moral conduct has to be understood under the ground of history, dependent on the degree of its development and cultivation. Indeed, as Linklater once highlighted, “Rationalism is as sceptic as much recent social theory about the supposition that immutable and universal moral truths reside in some transcendental conception of the self or particular civilization”.⁸⁴

⁸¹ M. Wight 1957-60: 29, 161.

⁸² M. Wight 1957-60: 29. What Fisher (1935: v) declared before the quoted statement deserves re-contextualization: “Men wiser and more learned I have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a predestinated pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following on another as wave follows on wave, only on great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalization, only one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognize in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen”.

⁸³ Porter 2007: 784.

⁸⁴ Linklater 1998: 209-10.

Third, it is because of this agnostic history that political actions, far from being governed by the timeless and ruthless rule of the calculation of power and interest, are conducted with both complexity in historical encompassment and comprehensiveness in goals. In a similar manner to Aron, Wight criticized the rational statesmen advocated by Morgenthau, on the basis that any of their actions together with the criterion of success are historically-sociologically conditioned:

“Morgenthau is unhistorical and unphilosophical in talking as if success [the defense of “national interest”] is something obvious and agreed. He is unhistorical, because [...historians] unceasingly remasticate the cud of historical reputation, reassessing achievement and reversing judgments in the light of new perspectives [...] Statesmen act under various pressures, and appeal with varying degrees of sincerity to various principles. It is for those who study international relations to judge their actions [...] It involves developing a sensitive awareness of the intractability of all political situations, and the moral quandary in which all statecraft operates.”⁸⁵

The statesman acts under pressure; the criterion of political success is not constant but historically-sociologically contingent. For Wight, this pragmatic outlook requires an awareness of incessant changes occurring in the course of international political environments, a sensitiveness to the intractability of political situation that “arises from the conception of politics as the field of the approximate and the provisional, and this is too is grounded in the Rationalist view of human nature”.⁸⁶ This adaption of political conduct to changing circumstances, as Jackson highlights, makes the “political theory of

⁸⁵ M. Wight 1957-60: 121, 258.

⁸⁶ M. Wight 1957-60: 242.

international society” a theory of “situational ethics”.⁸⁷ As Wight cited Edmund Burke as exemplification:

“We must soften into a credulity below the milkiness of infancy, to think all men virtuous. We must be tainted with a malignity truly diabolical, to believe all the world to be equally wicked and corrupt. Men are in public life as in private, some good, some evil. The elevation of the one, and the depression of the other, are the first objects of all true policy”.⁸⁸

Moral acts cannot be performed as the pursuit of absolute justice. Rather, they are adapted to relativity, embedded within a complex ground of human nature. Parallel to Aron’s reasonableness as in-between Kantianism and Machiavellianism, Wight argues that there is a “political morality” that distinguishes Rationalism from the other extremes. For Wight, this is the problem of “the justification of power”, deemed as “fundamental problem of politics”.⁸⁹ Whereas Machiavellians may pursue the national interest at the expense of the individual’s, and whereas Kantians place the responsibility of conviction over that of ethics, Rationalism will uphold a “political morality” that corresponds to the sociological potential implied by reason. “To be a Rationalist politician is to exist in a state of moral tension between the actual and the desirable”, which will “constantly dissolve with the passage of time”.⁹⁰ It is, explained Wight, “different from personal morality, as the moral duty of a trustee is different from personal morality” while at the same time it is “equally different from *raison d’état*, since it uphold the validity of the ethical in the realm of politics”. It is a synthesis between politics and morality, between the public and individualistic, something “broadened and capable of being suffused with moral values” that “political expedience itself has to consult the moral sense of those

⁸⁷ Jackson 1995: 124-6.

⁸⁸ M. Wight 1957-60: 242-3.

⁸⁹ M. Wight 1957-60: 99.

⁹⁰ M. Wight 1957-60: 243.

whom it will affect, and even combines with the moral sense of the politician himself. Thus it is softened into prudence, which is a moral virtue.”⁹¹ As Wight explained in a summative passage:

“technique and *virtu* which appeals implicitly to the principle of justification by success [...] and which implies a repetitive or cyclical theory of history, may be called Realist. A theory which stresses the moral tensions inherently in political action and the necessity and difficulty of justifying political power [...] and which appeals to the principle of the choice of the lesser evil, is in the Rationalist tradition. The Revolutionist view [...] divides the world into the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness [...] It is one [...] in which the end justifies the means; or which alternatively asserts that the kingdom of light will triumph only through identification of political with private ethics”.⁹²

The criterion of political success, far from residing in a transcendently universal principle, is rooted in moral predicaments which are in turn susceptible of solution in history.

For Wight, the assumption of rationality pervades and engenders at the same time a political theory, an outlook of history and a social theory, each of which can be said to be inseparable. Rationalism emphasizes the amenability of human nature to historical development, the agnostic and cautious historical outlook, and finally the acknowledgement of the significant role played by morality in the political arena. A rare attempt that grasps the inextricable and complex essence of Wight’s Rationalism comes from Brian Porter: “Rationalists appeal to reason and moral obligation and advocate prudent attempts to pursue constructive international cooperation; but they are usually ‘cautious and agnostic’ about any pattern or ultimate meaning in history, aware of the

⁹¹ M. Wight 1961: 128.

⁹² M. Wight 1957-60: 259.

unpredictable and contingent and manifesting no confidence in the permanence of any apparent progress in political institutions”.⁹³

In his later years Wight spoke less frequently of the term and turned more to the history of events rather than the one of thoughts. However, his later works such as “*De Systematibus Civitatum*” (1967), “The Origins of Our State-System” (1971) and “International Legitimacy” (1971), displayed a clear tendency to closely engage the historically changing sociological and moral foundations of international society that are consistent with the line of enquiry stipulated by Rationalism.⁹⁴ And these underlying Rationalistic presuppositions, although they cannot be brought out explicitly here, would exert enormous influences on later IR theorists including Reus-Smit (to whom I shall turn in the final section).

Rationalism Reconsidered

What makes Wight’s Rationalism so distinct from the Morgenthau and Keohane’s? What does the idea of rationality deliver? Two points deserve reflection here.

First, like the “Rationalism” criticized by Morgenthau and advocated by Keohane, Wight placed the concept of reason and the rational conception of human nature in the center of Rationalism. But in a drastic dissimilarity to both, Wight’s conception of reason presents a socially probable, historically changeable and morally sophisticated, image that is at odds with both the transcendent conception *and* with the prevalent interpretation of Rationalism as a clear-cut, analytical, concept. Indeed, too many IR theorists had been attracted to the statement posed by Wight – “The most fundamental question you can ask in international theory is: What is international society?” – and the idea of Rationalism is construed as exclusively related to the analytical concept of international society.⁹⁵ Bull, for instance, is such an interpreter who has

⁹³ Porter 2004: xxi.

⁹⁴ M. Wight 1967a, 1971a, 1971b.

⁹⁵ M. Wight 1960: 222. It is necessary to stress again that by posing this question as the “fundamental” one, he did

breathed too much analytical, sociological, air into the latter when resuscitating the thoughts. Aron is distant from Wight, but the conception of Rationalism shares, despite some minor dissimilarities,⁹⁶ many commonalities with Aron's reasonable action. Like the exponent of reasonable conduct, reason is conceived by Wight as engendering a tripartite scheme of the sociological, historical and moral that is explicitly expressed:

"International society, then, on this view, can be properly described only in *historical and sociological* depth. It is the habitual intercourse of independent communities, beginning in the Christendom of Western Europe and gradually extending through the world. It is manifested in the diplomatic system; in the conscious maintenance of the balance of power to preserve the independence of the member-communities; in the regular operations of international law, whose binding force is accepted over a wide though politically unimportant range of subjects; in economic, social and technical interdependence and the functional international institutions established latterly to regulate it. All these presuppose an international social consciousness, a world-wide community sentiment."⁹⁷

Second, is Wight's Rationalism as a tradition of thought detached from contemporary events which only serve as illustrations?⁹⁸ Recent revisionist reading by Iain Hall shows that the category of Rationalism, like Aron's reasonableness, demonstrates that Wight's contemplation on the urgent problems of international politics are rooted in his own specific historical, sociological and moral condition.⁹⁹ In fact, the Rationalist tradition is clearly linked to contemporary politics that are even more comprehensive than Hall

not intend to articulate that all end solely and ultimately with speculating on "what is international society".

⁹⁶ In one crucial aspect Aron and Wight depart their accompany: Aron's "historical sociology" contains a huge sector of military doctrine and technology, but Wight's is more softened and thought-oriented.

⁹⁷ Wight 1961: 96-7, emphasis added.

⁹⁸ The image of Wight as scholarly aristocratic is widely accepted, see e.g. Brown 1992: 9.

⁹⁹ I. Hall 2014.

suggested: Dulles' call for assistance for South Korea against the North's invasion (1951), Antony Eden's response to the Iran Oil Crisis and Suez Crisis (1952, 1956), and Eisenhower's appeal to Khrushchev for control of armaments (1953), all evidenced what Wight called Rationalism.¹⁰⁰ Even the "attempted distinction between the tactical and strategic use of atomic weapons" was used by Wight in a lecture to illustrate what makes the Grotian tradition distinct:

"Does the numerical increase in the number of combatants or fighting men who are killed with one nuclear bomb alter the quality of the attack? Is the marginal destruction of non-combatants morally decisive [...]? Is the effect of the use of certain weapons upon the future morally decisive – the effect...on the long-term physical geography of the locality attacked, making it a desert? Has the moral quality of the act been altered if it is done as reprisal or retaliation – the declaration of 'no first use' being seen as a moral justification? Does the moral quality of tactical use depend entirely on the pragmatic validity of the distinction from strategic use [...]? This is the maze in which we are lost. [...And to simplify:] if you are apt to think the moral problems of international politics are simple, you are a natural, instinctive Kantian; if you think they are non-existent, bogus, or delusory, you are a natural Machiavellian; and if you are apt to think them infinitely complex, bewildering, and perplexing, you are probably a natural Grotian".¹⁰¹

For Wight, these crises entreat resolutions. And his own search for an order, as Hall aptly argued, was precisely what Wight constantly referred to as "Rationalism", "Constitutionalism", "Whiggism", "Grotianism", or, more peculiarly, "Western Values". "History-writing", Hall continued, "was, for Wight,

¹⁰⁰ M. Wight 1959-60: 184-5. Hall confined his focus within Wight's concern with the rapidly increased number of decolonized states in Asia and Africa and their demand for a new international order

¹⁰¹ M. Wight 1959-60: 33-4.

a political project”.¹⁰² Rationalism, which views human beings as rational and gives rise to complex considerations in the tripartite light of historicity, sociality and morality, is used for or provides solutions to contemporary, political, problems.¹⁰³ (Notice, however, that while Wight provides Rationalistic answers to contemporary questions, he also identifies answers of Realistic and Revolutionary kinds. This raises the question of whether Wight identifies his own position with Rationalism, a topic I eschew here.)

During this period Wight was so occupied with these Rationalistic questions that even *the* most (in)famously paradoxical article he composed – “Why Is There No International Theory?” (1959) – is profoundly misunderstood in this regard. Several English School members have decoded why Wight contrived such an anomaly that amounts to a self-abnegation: by proclaiming the nonexistence of international theory, Wight precisely intended to stimulate, provoke, and invite refutations to his propositions, and in the end he succeeded.¹⁰⁴ The article, based on an extended, polemical, and “Realistized” version of the opening lecture of *International Theory* and which is the inaugural paper for the first meeting of British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, is orchestrated to tease out a Rationalistic kind of answer.¹⁰⁵ International theory should not be reduced into historical studies of what luridly was, as the formula “Politics: International Politics = Political Theory: Historical Interpretation” equates (but investigate the moral dimension of the past); it should not be characterized not only by “paucity but also by intellectual and moral poverty” (but as a tradition “all of us...really belong”, and “the road with the most conscious acknowledgement of continuity”); it should not be

¹⁰² I. Hall 2014: 13, 15.

¹⁰³ Wight was predisposed of using thoughts in the past as illuminating the currently concrete issues rather than considering them as ready-made answers that had already been there, merely awaiting rediscovery because the moral predicaments had been experienced before.

¹⁰⁴ Is it an anomaly that “Martin Wight”, questioned Ian Clark (1996: 1) as a representative, “the foremost presenter of international relations in the form of various traditions of thought, should also have been the writer to express greatest skepticism about the existence of a body of international theory at all”? Wight’s self-negation in the essay has been noticed by many, see Bull 1972: 114, Porter 1978: 69, Dunne 1993: 316 [fn. 71], 1998: 94-5. Replies to Wight can be found in, for instance, Brown 1992: Intro.

¹⁰⁵ Butterfield & M. Wight 1966: preface; compare M. Wight 1959a with M. Wight 1957-1959: Intro.

synonymous with “the theory of survival”, as if “international politics is the realm of recurrence and repetition” (but become “political philosophy of international relations”).¹⁰⁶ For Wight, the international realm is *not* historically repetitive, socially futile, and morally barren, and his self-negation is rather an invitation to others to recognize and expand inquires on these historical, sociological and moral dimensions.

Irrespective of whether Wight himself is a Rationalist or not, the tradition of Rationalism has at least been depicted by him as a tradition of thought or line of enquiry that is historically agnostic and morally sensitive to the tension inherent in political action, as a sharp contrast to both Realism and Revolutionism. His emphasis on the moral dimension of actions within a specifically historical sociological condition is perhaps *the* most significantly indigenous exemplification of historical rationality within IR: it is more lucid than Aron’s reasonableness, and shares the same conceptual clarity but it has a definitely more historical-sociological dimension than Boucher’s one of “historical reason” (as we shall soon see). Nevertheless, Wight’s legacy had been largely overlooked when it was passed down. Nowadays even the English School members seem to be bifurcating their orientations into a historical sociology without normative and moral inquiry and without too much considerations to the historical background.¹⁰⁷ At any rate, for those who want to go on with Wight’s Rationalism, it would be a persistent conundrum to reunify the historical, sociological, and moral trinity into a more balanced and single whole.

(iii) Historical Reason in the Historical Turn: David Boucher and

Christian Reus-Smit on Rationality

¹⁰⁶ M. Wight 1959a: 33, 26.

¹⁰⁷ Compare Buzan and Little’s *International Systems in World History* (2001) with Jackson’s (2000) *Global Covenant*.

Raymond Aron and Martin Wight's works were soon submerged within the rise of economic issues in the 1970s. The issues of nuclear deterrence, bipolar confrontation and disarmament – it was these issues that Aron's reasonableness addressed and Wight's Rationalism touched on – were outdated by the outgrowth of economic interexchange and the associated rise of the MNCs.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, when compared with the IR scholars who drew consciously on utilitarian rationality to study international institutions and economic interdependence, Aron and Wight's notions of historical rationality also seemed to be overly abstruse and imprecise. Rather than thinking in a complex manner that simultaneously took historical, sociological and moral perspectives into account, Waltz's *Theory*, published in the final year of the 1970s, became the exemplar for its rigorously analytical conceptualization of an unhistorical system within which the balance of power, the rise of MNCs and the issue of interdependence receive an ultimately objective explanation. The sweeping style of the utilitarian-rational theory throughout the 1980s gave a decisive impetus to building theories on the conception of states as metahistorical, interest-maximizing, subjects, as exemplified in Gilpin's "sociological plus economic" approach, Krasner's "system" intellectual orientation and Keohane's "systematic analysis".

Yet the search for the historically rational – to view international systems as possessing an historically-sociologically changing existence, to appraise the moral foundations of international political action as historically conditioned but persistent, and to seek the transformation of the international itself – never ceased. In what follows I discuss Boucher and Reus-Smit's conceptions of rationality. Before engaging with this theme, I preface the discussion with a brief contextualization of the "historical turn" that has occurred within IR.¹⁰⁹ Without understanding the generally intellectual milieu – how in Boucher's view that it

¹⁰⁸ Raymond Aron's celebrated *The Imperial Republic* (1973), although touching on such newly developed issues as international trade, still seem to be incompetent. The late Martin Wight's essays – "International legitimacy" (1971), "Triangles and Duels" (1972), and above all the revision of *Power Politics* – demonstrated the influence of decolonization in Africa, the Sino-Soviet split and the nuclear armament on his thoughts.

¹⁰⁹ A comprehensive discussion, see Vaughan-Williams 2005.

is through the “historical materialism” of Justin Rosenberg that “the elements of the tradition of Historical Reason that have come to dominate”, and Reus-Smit’s inspiration that “critical international theory” treats every political association and action as historically contingent¹¹⁰ – it would be difficult to understand how they built their theories on the preceding endeavors and grounded their thoughts more deeply in the disciplinary discourse than Aron and Wight. Indeed, there is a need to grasp the significance of their works as themselves immanent within a historically intellectual process, a process in which many theorists, although not explicitly using the word “rationality” and inspired by various springs (Postmodernism, Marxism, Historical Sociology), had at least implied, and drawn on, similar notions.

Background: The Revenge of History and its “Grand Return” from 1979 to 1999

The historical conceptions of rationality, exemplified in Boucher and Reus-Smit’s works, are not insulated from the general intellectual milieu. From the 1970s to the 2000s, Anglophone IR has passed two stages along the way to history.

The first stage (1979-1989) which revolved around Waltz’s *Theory* and the *historical* criticism that it incurred, subsequently paved the way for later theorists such as Reus-Smit. Stimulated by Waltz’s claim that the anarchical system had not changed over the last two millennia, IR theorists then responded with forceful historical criticism. The first, but least famous, refutation came from Richard Rosecrance, a disciple of Raymond Aron, who argued, under a deliberate Wightian title “International Theory Revisited” (1981), that both Bull and Waltz sacrificed historical complexity to the altar of analytical clarity. The piece resulted in a debate between Waltz and Rosecrance; but the attention

¹¹⁰ Boucher 1998: 375-7, Reus-Smit 1999: xi, 2009: 218-9, Price & Reus-Smit 1998.

was soon attracted to J.G. Ruggie's review essay "Transformation and Continuity" (1983), an article that was considered as "so fundamental in bringing international systems change on to the IR research agenda in the first place".¹¹¹ For Ruggie, Waltz failed to

"account for, or even to describe, the most important contextual change in international politics in this *millennium*: the shift from the medieval to the modern international system. The medieval system was, by Waltz's own account, an anarchy. Yet the difference between it and the modern international system cannot simply be attributed to differences in the distribution of capabilities among their constituent units. To do so would be historically inaccurate, and nonsensical besides. The problem is that a dimension of change is missing from Waltz's model."¹¹²

Further to the lack of a dimension of change, Ashley denounced the unhistorical nature of *Theory*. For Ashley, *Theory* not only denied "history as process" but also repudiated "the historical significance of practice, the moment at which men and women enter with greater or lesser degrees of consciousness into the making of their world".¹¹³

Among the many impacts made by the historical critics of Waltz, there are two that deserve particular emphasis. First is their reinvigoration of the significance of historicity (or historical-sociology). Although these critics rely on sociology (Durkheim) and poststructuralism (Derrida) to resurge the historicity of international relations and rarely draw on historical sociology (Aron), they have achieved the same result that Aron, Hoffmann and Rosecrance had once proposed two decades ago but which Waltz repudiated: to direct focus to historical change and the transformation of international systems (as I show in

¹¹¹ Hobson 1998: 306, cf. Hobden 1998: 56-7, Reus-Smit 1999: 88-9. Andrew Linklater (1995: 254, 1998: 19) once called this essay the "first major critical essay on neo-realism" against what he named "the immutability thesis".

¹¹² Ruggie 1983: 273.

¹¹³ Ashley 1984: 258-9.

the section on Aron and the system theories preceding Waltz). For many later IR scholars including Reus-Smit, critics such as Ashley and the “critical” movement they initiated have provided a lasting inspiration in the search for a rationality that is contingent on history.¹¹⁴

Second, however, is the expense paid for reviving history through such a particularly sociological or poststructuralist way. Since during this stage the theory of poststructuralism (for instance) is used more for arguing against Waltz than for claiming for an alternative, many IR theorists are dismayed by an overarching rhetorical tone and a seemingly relativist tendency. Scholars such as Boucher and Halliday are representative here: both of them, although agreeing with their critics on the significance of history, caution that any attempt to ask “us to suspend our epistemic and moral judgment” or to deny at least a “rationality, or historical narrative” is inherently dangerous.¹¹⁵ Thus for Boucher, it is crucial to search for “a historically emerging criterion of conduct” that is “relational, rather than relative”.¹¹⁶

With the end of the Cold War, IR undergoes another wave of historicizing movement that climaxes in 2002. As a succession of the first wave, the second follows on and pushes the problem of history more to the forefront. Yet unlike the previous one, the second wave is both innovative in source and cognizant of research agendas. Many enterprises have been embarked on,¹¹⁷ although two are particularly crucial for a comprehension of Boucher and Reus-Smit’s endeavors.

First is the influence of Martin Wight. Wight’s examination of historical sociology and of the moral foundations of the international provides an operational exemplar for such scholars as Reus-Smit in their search for the “historically and culturally contingent form/s of consciousness”. Wight’s

¹¹⁴ Reus-Smit 1999: xi.

¹¹⁵ Boucher 1998: 40, Halliday 1993: 37-8.

¹¹⁶ Boucher 1998: 39, see also 376-7.

¹¹⁷ See the excellent overview by Vaughan-Williams 2005.

discussion on the three traditions, on the other hand, engenders Boucher's vehement reaction to the form of the former's definition of tradition.

The second is the rise of the theories of historical sociology. These theorists, despite being profoundly shaped by Marx (and Tilly and Mann) in thought, trace back to the works of Aron and Hoffmann and seek to resurrect forgotten insights. It is through the efforts of these historical sociologists' that Boucher sees the tradition of historical reason as having "come to dominate". Fred Halliday, one of the most productive points of initial engagement for many articles around the turn of 1990 (mostly collected into *Rethinking International Relations*, 1994), reclaimed the significance of Aron's argument that international political conduct is socially shaped by the homogenous/heterogeneous system.¹¹⁸ "The international", Halliday stressed, "is a domain replete with moral claims and counter-claims" and "the 'ought' will not go away".¹¹⁹ Justin Rosenberg's influential *The Empire of Civil Society* (1994) acquired much success in diagnosing the "optical illusion" of Realism to view all states' action as arising out of the consideration of *raison d'état*.¹²⁰ Past the mid-1990s and up towards its end, the growth of such works became explosive. J.M. Hobson proclaimed, in his first manifesto of a "Weberian historical sociology" (1998), that the "process of change", "complex change", and "immanent orders of change" of international relations had to be examined.¹²¹ "The problem here is", reemphasized Hobson in an Aronian tone, that "there has not been one international system but many, all of which are quite different, and all of which are marked by different rhythms or tempos."¹²² Stephen Hobden, in his boundary-breaking *International Relations and Historical Sociology* (1998), cited Hoffmann's statement (cited in the previous chapter) as endorsement, and raised the issue of "inclusion of history as a variable" and "the requirement to

¹¹⁸ Halliday 1990: 137, 1992.

¹¹⁹ Halliday 1994a: 236.

¹²⁰ Rosenberg 1994a: 90, 1994b.

¹²¹ Hobson 1998a: 286, 290-1.

¹²² Hobson 2002a: 10.

treat all social formations historically”.¹²³ Halliday, once again, in his *Revolution and World Politics* (1999) showed that revolutions in history can be “rationally” understood.¹²⁴ Under the editorship of Hobson and Hobden, *Historical Sociology of International Relations* (2002) promoted the movement to its climax.¹²⁵

Within such a broad scenario what is it that makes Boucher and Reus-Smit stand out? Certainly, most of these thinkers in the historicizing movement have theorized as well as practiced the idea of history rationality, although they may not articulate the concept in explicit terms. Nevertheless, they are surpassed by Boucher and Reus-Smit in two key respects. First, both have consciously and conspicuously endeavored to pioneer a conception of rationality. For Boucher and Reus-Smit, an alternative conception of rationality in a historical-sociological-moral light constitutes a major progression in international theory. Far from being a dispute over the semantic meaning, it represents an advance in the history of ideas and of events through the exposition of the historical-sociological basis behind the political conducts. Second, and perhaps more crucially, is that unlike some historical thinkers who keep a less balanced view – Rosenberg, for instance, is too historically materialistic without being moralistic enough – both Boucher and Reus-Smit have strongly emphasized the centrality of the moral issue. A historical conception of rationality shows that the actors’ actions are inherently embedded within such a moral texture. The historical, sociological, *and* moral form an inextricable nexus. In what follows let me explicate their concerns in turn.

David Boucher and “Historical Reason”

¹²³ Hobden 1998: 186–7, also 196. Compare, further, Hobden (1999a) with the rejoinder by Nexon (2001).

¹²⁴ Halliday 1999: 295.

¹²⁵ Hobson 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2004; Hobden, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; Teschke 2003. Secondary comments on this movement, see Rengger 1996, M. Hall 2002.

Boucher's search for "historical reason" as a third tradition is both related to, and distinguishable from, the approach adopted by Martin Wight. In this form, Wight's articulation of a *tradition* of Rationalism between Realists and Revolutionists represents an advance for its transcendence over the dichotomization of political thought into antitheses that are too simplistic and violently procrustean.¹²⁶ Yet, on the other hand, Wight's conception of tradition is vertically unchangeable and horizontally exclusive. A Wightian tradition, Boucher criticized, is "like coins that change hands...whose value is little affected by inflation", and the traditions are "mutually exclusive and autonomous categories".¹²⁷ These criticisms of Wight's tradition, despite falling into the commonplace interpretation (as I showed in previous section), are still illuminating for demonstrating how Boucher longed to cut across diametric opposites and find the *via media*. Indeed, for Boucher as well as for Wight, historical reason represents a synthesis rather than a repudiation of the other two categories: it is "the antithetical criteria of Realism and Idealism find their synthesis in historical reason".¹²⁸

Although he consciously kept a distance between his "tradition" and Wight's, Boucher was less conscious about the substantial similarity between his "Historical Reason" and Wight's tradition of *Rationalism*. Speaking in a Wightian tone, Boucher argues that both the Machiavellians and Kantians are inadequate in grounding morality on "abstract natural law divorced from the experience of beings" and on "self-interest and capable of justifying any capricious act".¹²⁹ The Machiavellians (or what Boucher named as "Empirical Realists"), and the Kantians (or what he called "Universal Moral Order"), fail to view human beings as equipped with "the capacity for self-redemption" through which human beings gradually transform their morality in the historical process which is

¹²⁶ Boucher 1998: 10.

¹²⁷ Boucher 1998: 16-7.

¹²⁸ Boucher 1991: 127.

¹²⁹ Boucher 1998: 299.

“gradual unfolding” for human action.¹³⁰ There has to be an alternative, a middle ground, which “posits a thick conception of morality deeply embedded in the practices of a living developing society”.¹³¹

What is this tradition of historical reason, that is similar to Aron’s reasonable praxeology and Wight’s Rationalism but which has somehow distinguished itself as a “tradition”? In both his article which pioneered the concept of historical reason, and its fuller exposition in *Political Theories of International Relations* (1998),¹³² Boucher delineated it as a category with four attributes.

First is its distinct emphasis on the moral, a trait became more frequently pronounced in Boucher’s historical reason than Aron’s. Historical reason “posits a thick conception of morality deeply embedded in the practices of a living developing society”.¹³³ Notice how this “thick” conception of morality is posited. On the one hand, unlike the empirical realist who conceptualizes man and state as in nature an utilitarian, individualistic, seeker of interest and power, historical rationality will by contrast commit to the solidary view that morality is integral to political conduct as a social activity. On the other hand, historical reason has a “thin” idea of humanity,¹³⁴ in comparison with the universal Kantians who consider morality to be unreservedly obliged to follow transcendent principles. Historical reason considers the problem of moral judgment to be integral to political conduct.

Second, the language of historical reason needs to be uttered for explanatory as well as judgmental purpose. Historical reason searches for “a criterion of state action which explained more adequately what characterized international relations, and which also provided a standard of conduct in terms of which the rationality of the action of states could be judged”.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Boucher 1998: 356.

¹³¹ Boucher 1998: 39.

¹³² Boucher 1991, 1998.

¹³³ Boucher 1998: 39.

¹³⁴ Boucher 1998: 39.

¹³⁵ Boucher 1998: 35.

Third, this criterion is not abstractly transcendent, but on the very contrary “to be found in the historical process itself”.¹³⁶ It is immanent within the historical-sociological process, and rooted in the changing forms and content of human beings, their associations, and their interactions:

“The answer was to formulate a criterion that was not immersed in immediate state interests, nor at the same time entirely divorced from them. It was to be found in the historical process itself and in the traditions of states’ associations with others: a criterion, to paraphrase Rousseau, which would unite utility and justice. The criterion would have to be general in that it was not rooted in the immediacy of the preset and, indeed, was still in the process of formation as history unfolded, but it would not be so general and abstract as to postulate a preexisting set of principles to which international law must conform”.¹³⁷

For Boucher, as for Aron, historical reason cannot dispense with the calculation of utility but it pursues utility in a way that unites “utility and justice”.

Fourth, this historical reason, standing in between utility and justice, the immediate and distant, and the general and concrete, exemplifies and embodies particular in many classical thinkers’ thoughts. Like Wight who tends to find exemplars in thought behind action, Boucher also discovers that historical reason has been expressed by classical thinkers. Edmund Burke (a thinker Wight prefers to cite), for instance, regarded the moral right of man as rooted “in a sort of middle, incapable of definition, but not impossible to be discerned”. This aphorism, Boucher continued to decipher, indicated that “the principles and rules which guide conduct are to be discerned in the historical process itself, that is, the process from which they emanated and in which our

¹³⁶ Boucher 1998: 37.

¹³⁷ Boucher 1998: 37.

individual and national characters are formed".¹³⁸ "For Marx", Boucher interpreted in Aron's tone (on historical man), "it was only by means of the historical process that man became a human being".¹³⁹ In Marx, moral freedom, material production and social progress, which are inextricably linked, possesses "not one universal nature but changing natures constituted by the historical condition".¹⁴⁰ And Marx's emphasis on the historical process exemplified in Justin Rosenberg's revelation of the "optic illusion" suffered from the Realists who viewed international politics as the transcendent movement of power.

Indeed for Boucher, Historical reason stands for the very same criterion of conduct that Raymond Aron and Martin Wight have advocated: human nature, the states and international systems are in a constant changing process; and this criterion, which solves the Machiavellian and Kantian predicaments, can only be found by merging the gap between the scheme and concrete historical world in and through which actions can be realized gradually.

*Christian Reus-Smit: "Rationality as a Culturally and Historically
Contingent Form of Consciousness"*

Similarly to Boucher, Reus-Smit also embarks on a search for a conception of rationality as the nexus between morality and historical sociology. Unlike Boucher who rediscovered the third historical tradition in classic thinkers' international thoughts, Reus-Smit contrived a notion of rationality to combat what he saw the dualistic mistakes committed by all the mainstream IR theories.

In one facet, the historical-sociological background for political action is completely purged of from Neorealism, Neoliberalism and Constructivism. The Neorealists (Gilpin) presented a picture in which international system and

¹³⁸ Boucher 1998: 317, emphasis removed.

¹³⁹ Boucher 1998: 360.

¹⁴⁰ Boucher 1998: 356,

institutions are perennially shaped by the rise and fall of cost-benefits calculating hegemons. The Neoliberals (Keohane), using “system-constraint analysis”, depicted states as “timeless, context-free rational actors”, established “abstract models of institutional rationality”, and thus failed to expound why drastically different international institutions had been pioneered before and after 1945.¹⁴¹ The Constructivists (Katzenstein and the “cultural rationalists”) brought cultures and norms at the second image in, but fell short of explicating “social textures of different international societies” at the macro level or the “institutional rationality...in particular social and historical contexts”.¹⁴²

In the other aspect, all these theories have suffered from the deficiencies of morality. The Neorealists (Waltz) had forgotten how their classical predecessor (Carr) had regarded political conduct as “a perpetual contest between reason and unreason”. The Neoliberals, betraying their normative origin, reduced political action to interest calculation which could have, as Norman Angell once believed, been superseded by the human “capacity to reconcile the real and right”, winning a “battle between rationality and irrationality”.¹⁴³ Constructivists, being the outgrowth of the critical-theory enterprise, have “have lost sight of the normative ethos inherent in such a theory” and have instead forged a “dangerous liaison” with the mainstreams.¹⁴⁴

It is as a remedy to both errors that Reus-Smit developed his rationality in *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations* (1999). His distinctive conception of rationality is also outlined in “The Strange Death of Liberal International Theory” (2001) and “The Idea of History and History with Ideas” (2002).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Reus-Smit 1999: 160.

¹⁴² Reus-Smit 1999: 5.

¹⁴³ Reus-Smit 2001: 580.

¹⁴⁴ Reus-Smit 1999: 169, see further Price & Reus-Smit 1998: 270 ff.

¹⁴⁵ Reus-Smit 1999, 2001, 2002.

Reus-Smit's conception of rationality has two footings. Its first footing is in historical sociology. Heavily influenced by Ruggie's works and Wight's *System of States*, Reus-Smit criticized the Neo-Neo theorists' "deontological conception of institutional rationality" and proposed "a historically informed constructivist theory".¹⁴⁶ Rather than assuming the rationality of actors as transcendently "unfettered and unconstituted by cultural values and historical experiences", Reus-Smit argued for an alternatively "ontological conception" or "*embedded* rationality" which is specifically grounded in the historical sociology of international politics.¹⁴⁷

Notice, first, that Reus-Smit's historical sociological basis on which rationality is embedded is nuanced in character. To this extent, it distinguishes itself from Aron's notion that historical sociology is about the mutably *all-encompassing*, social, economic, and technological condition, leaning towards a "cultural value" or an "institutional rationality". For Reus-Smit, it is this value-laden context, as opposed to the specific features of a materialistic environment, that marks out how actors come into existence in the first place. Indeed, Reus-Smit was disposed to cite A.H.L. Heeren's dictum as an exemplar: "To have a correct apprehension, therefore, of the ruling age of each, and to exhibit the particular maxims arising from them, will be the first prerequisite of the historian".¹⁴⁸

On the other hand, this conception of the historical-sociological as culturally idealistic, although resembling Wight's view of Rationalism as a trait of ideas in history, still differs from Wight's in its location of rationality. Whereas for Wight rationality manifests itself in three paralleled, horizontal, spheres, it is for Reus-Smit an existence that resides in a vertically deeper layer. Historical rationality is not merely the Boucherian synthesis between utility and justice, nor Wightian's sensitiveness to the intractability of situation, but something that makes them constitutively possible. In Reus-Smit's account, this is defined as

¹⁴⁶ Reus-Smit 1999: 160, 5.

¹⁴⁷ Reus-Smit 1999: 159-61, emphasis in original.

¹⁴⁸ Reus-Smit 1999: 26.

the “deep constitutive values”, “constitutive structure”, and “ethical foundations” that generate social institutions such as diplomacy and international law genetically. (For Wight these institutions are the very manifestations of Rationalism, which the latter carried with itself.) As Reus-Smit himself clarified, the “issue-specific regimes” as WTO and the NPT are far from the exemplification of historical reason, nor is it even sufficient to move towards a deeper level and terminate at such organizing principle identified by Ruggie as “Multilateralism”!¹⁴⁹ This historically contingent form of consciousness, therefore, is based on the recognition of the underlying structure of human history.

Notice, second, that Reus-Smit regards this historical-sociological substratum of an idealistic kind as equally underpinning domestic and international realms. Reus-Smit once called it “normative symmetry”.¹⁵⁰ Historical rationality is “the inextricable connection between moral values, the identity of the state, and rightful state action”; it defines “what constitutes a legitimate actor, entitled to all rights and privileges of statehood”, and points to “the basic parameters of rightful state action”.¹⁵¹ The legitimacy, to which states resort in undertaking action in both domestic and international realms, is the very same. In this respect Reus-Smit stands close to Wight and much closer to Aron whose proposition has nevertheless been largely forgotten by later theorists – diplomatic action can be shaped by both domestic regime and an international homogenous system, both of which are rested on the same ideologically legitimating foundation. It penetrates into the underlying identities and purposes that designate what can be counted as rightful interest, morality, and statehood.

The second footing of this embedded rationality is in the moral terrain. Similar to Aron’s “praxeology”, the Wightian Rationalist “political morality” and

¹⁴⁹ Ruggie (ed.) 1993.

¹⁵⁰ Reus-Smit 1999: 49.

¹⁵¹ Reus-Smit 1999: xii, 13-4, 26, 156, 32, where he sometimes refers to “ethical foundations”, “foundational institutions”.

Boucher's "historical reason" that all aim at overcoming the Machiavellian and Kantian dichotomy, Reus-Smit defined politics as lying "at the intersection of instrumental and ethical deliberation and action", a "juncture of the normative and the instrumental" or something "neither strictly instrumental nor strictly moral".¹⁵² What international politics should study is "more than the strategic interaction of rational egoists". Instead, speaking in a Wightian language, Reus-Smit argued that it had to address "practical reason" that "mediates between individual and group self-interest and utility, on the one hand, and "ethical conceptions of what is right and good, on the other".¹⁵³ Just as Aron who reiterates the indispensability of the fourfold scheme, Reus-Smit argues that any theory must be reflected on a threefold categorical scheme which simultaneously combines the conceptual, historical-sociological, and moral.¹⁵⁴

How should, then, this embedded rationality in historical-sociological grounds with praxeological dimension be envisaged? Reus-Smit replied thus:

"Only by treating institutional rationality as a culturally and historically contingent form of consciousness – a way of thinking that is as normative as it is calculating, as value-laden as it is logical – can we explain the contrasting institutional practices of different societies of states. [...] An ontological or embedded conception of institutional rationality seeks to capture the intersubjective forces that shape cognition and choice; it refers to the social foundations of collective action, to the metavalues that condition the institutional texture of international society".¹⁵⁵

Formulated in this way, the rationality as a culturally and historically contingent form of consciousness – let us call it historical rationality for short – bears little differences from the previous conceptions. It is contingent on historical-

¹⁵² Reus-Smit 2001: 573-81, *passim*.

¹⁵³ Reus-Smit 2001: 591.

¹⁵⁴ Reus-Smit 1999: 168-70.

¹⁵⁵ Reus-Smit 1999: 161-2.

sociological backgrounds, just as Aron's reasonableness and Wight's Rationalism's can be said to be dependent on specific historical-sociological conditions. It is furthermore "as normative as calculating", a defining trait of historical reason displayed in Aron's reasonable diplomatic-strategic action and Wight's Rationalist political morality.

For Reus-Smit, historical rationality is concretely changed, giving rise to variously "institutional solutions that states deem appropriate, with institutional choices varying from one society of states to another".¹⁵⁶ Four historical cases had been employed for illustration. In the Ancient Greek system, the dominant, historically-contingent, form of consciousness was public discourse and the cultivation of "bios politikos" and that the rightful states' action was circumscribed by arbitration from Delphi. The Italian city states were formed for the pursuit of civic glory and, "oratorical diplomacy" was the main institution for their intercourse. As for Absolutist Europe, states were organized along the line of "divinely ordained social order" and international relations was in fact conducted via inter-dynastic marriage and the natural law. Finally, there was the modern state system in which, according to Reus-Smit, the promotion of individual welfare and democratization, and the collaboration among states on the basis of multilateralism, become the dominant theme. For all these different societies of states, Reus-Smit sum up, "constitutive structures are not all the same: culture and history matter".¹⁵⁷

Viewed in this light, Reus-Smit's rationality, which contextualizes political conduct within an encompassing historical, sociological, and moral framework, is archetypically historical. The rationality construed by Reus-Smit reaches into the very belief that is not only contingent on, but integral to, a specifically historical, sociological and moral condition.

(iv) Conclusion

¹⁵⁶ Reus-Smit 1999: 64.

¹⁵⁷ Reus-Smit 1999: 39.

Although in his recent work Reus-Smit turned to international law,¹⁵⁸ the historicizing movement in which he once participated is becoming increasingly powerful in IR. Hobson's *The Eastern Origin of Western Civilization* (2004) and especially his *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760-2010* (2012) are defining works.¹⁵⁹ George Lawson, in "The Promise of the Historical Sociology" (2006), announced in a Reus-Smitian tone that "institutions are not conceived as timeless entities performing a universal task", "but as variables that are particular to a time and space". "Social relations", Lawson continued, "are constituted *in* time and space".¹⁶⁰ Indeed, such examples are endless; and what needs to be done is to pinpoint the distinctiveness and promising feature of historical reason that can advance this movement in the near future. What are, however, the defining features of historical reason?

Historical Reason and Its Changing Conceptions

From Aron to Reus-Smit, I have reconstituted the hidden history of the four particular conceptions of rationality, all of which have been categorized under the rubric of "historical rationality". The similarities among these conceptions are evident and extensive. Rationality is conditioned by a historical, sociological, and moral ensemble. The conduct of strategic-diplomatic action, the existence of man, political association and international institutions are always in a specifically historical-sociological process. The transcendent calculation of power, interest and risk, cannot substitute the impacts of the concrete, the agnostic, the contingent. Human beings, the states, and the international realm has a sociological dimension that allows their mutual interaction and proper development. Morality is historically-sociologically conditioned, developed, and

¹⁵⁸ Reus-Smit 2008.

¹⁵⁹ J.M. Hobson 2004, 2012.

¹⁶⁰ Lawson 2006: 404, 410.

transformed; the moral is always located in between the extremes of “Machiaevillism” and “Kantianism”, between “empirical realism” and “universal moral order”. Historical reason, in short, is dependent on a nexus of historical, sociological and moral ensemble. It is a conception of rationality inextricably related to morality that is both historically-sociologically conditioned and changeable.

These conceptions do have subtle differences, since historical reason as a language has a history of itself. One is the different idea of the *historical-sociological*: at one extreme Aron considered it as more related to events and, technology occupies a huge share; at the other Boucher and Reus-Smit preferred to discover the instantiation in thoughts, values, and beliefs; for Wight it is more oriented to thought (compared with Aron) but less idealistic than Boucher and Reus-Smit's. Another is the concept of the *sociological*: for Aron there is an “international system” that can be dichotomized into two polarities; for Wight and Reus-Smit it is a society, which implies much coherency and has thus developed the “sociological” dimension of historical reason.

The Aesthetics of Historical Reason: Its Pursuit of Realness and

Precision

The thinkers of historical reason have always been dismayed by the assertion of transcendent criterion. One of such a claim is “Realism”. Morgenthau's announcement that the “concept” of the “interest defined in terms of power” reveals the political essence, for instance, is considered by both Aron and Wight as inherently unrealistic. It does not take into account of the historically contingent and sociologically pluralistic; nor does it, as I quote Wight's remark on Morgenthau as explanation, bring the situational ethics into its concern. In Boucher's view, the tradition of Realism, running through Thucydides, Machiavelli and Morgenthau, displays a conspicuous tendency of justifying the subordination of (international) morality and community to individual political

calculation (*raison d'état*) by a transhistorical view of human nature as rapacious.¹⁶¹ Similarly, to claim that the states' actions are determined by a "timeless" calculation of interest, both in a Neorealist (Gilpin) and Neoliberal (Keohane) form, is for Reus-Smit too abstract to be real. Another, interrelated, claim is about precision. For Aron, the pursuit of the deterrence theorists to introduce the concept of utilitarian rationality for their construction of a demonstrable, operational and quantitative measurement is profoundly misleading (see more in chapter two).

What is the historical-rational view of realness and precision? It seems that the realness and accurateness demanded by historical conception of reason is derived from looking closer at the historically specific (past, the present, and the future). Instead of mistaking abstractness for realness, a "realistic" theory is based on the scrutiny of the complex – the multiple objective pursued by the states, the historically concrete date, and the pressure and contingency of consequence caused by social coexistence. Instead of measuring accuracy quantitatively, a "precise" theory will locate political conduct within a process in which thoughts, agents, actions, and political associations is in a constant flux. Since mobility and change is constitutive to political conduct, "precision" demands more attentiveness to the process of change rather than the "proven" system of thought (recall Morgenstern's plea).

Going Critical? Critique Transcendent vs. Critique Immanent

One of the merits of the historical conception of reason is that it can enable IR scholars to undertake an immanent critique. Indeed, from a *rationality-centered* point of view, there are mainly two ways to critique international politics. One is Morgenthau's Realism that statesman's actions are appraised *transcendentally* in relation to the observer's "rational" standard. By conceptualizing interest as

¹⁶¹ See e.g. Boucher 1998: 141, 145ff.

power, by directing and disciplining political action under the intellect (instead of the moral, sentimental, and passionate feelings), the rational theory offers a map that points to the “timeless feature of its geography distinct from their ever-changing historic setting”. Indeed, the definition of interest may vary in accordance with the historical-sociological contexts; nor will statesman act solely on interest, immune from his own ideological preferences.¹⁶² But – Morgenthau warned gravely – it is by construing political action as power seeking, by imposing such a concept on the subject matter, by “testing of this rational hypothesis against the actual facts and their consequences” that one acquires a standpoint to scrutinize the political landscape.

The critique, if exercised by Aron, Wight, Boucher and Reus-Smit, will be fundamentally different in its *immanent* nature. Whereas for Morgenthau political action is tested “against” a transcendently rational criterion – the “rational” (states)man is the one who grasps “the *perennial truths* of politics”, as Wight understands him too well¹⁶³ – the historical rationalists will evaluate political actions in relation to specifically historical-sociological circumstances, “the intractability of all political situations”, the “historical process itself”, and “the particular social and historical contexts”. Human beings are rational in a historical sense: they understand their mode of existence as historical beings (“historical man”) that belong to a chain of process in which they have not only a duty to heed the moral dimension of the past – the development of history will necessarily leads us to “judge the severely the practices of states” – but leave our own practices to be judged in the future. Historical rationality requires “retrospective insight” into the past as well as symmetrical foresight on the future.¹⁶⁴ Their rationality implies that they have “a sense of history as dynamic, and the individual as having responsibility in it”, and they are capable of gradually transforming morality in history. It should be recalled that Morgenthau

¹⁶² Morgenthau 1954a: 7-8.

¹⁶³ M. Wight 1959b.

¹⁶⁴ Aron 1958: 18.

also conceptualized political conduct as antinomic, in an everlasting conflict of the rational and irrational, ideal and real. But the antinomy and tensional in a historical-rational sense has a much complex meaning: it requires the conducts to be judged temporally. To think in the manner of historical reason is to conceptualize the problem as in a lasting paradox along the line of history. The political action undertook today is at the same time standing in-between the tensions amid ruthless interest and virtuous morality, amid individual wants and societal solidarity, and amid the past casting a shadow on the present which is in turn overshadowed by the future. This emphasis on the tensional, paradoxical, and antinomic endows particular strength on historical reason.

From a historical-rational perspective, international relations (small i.r.) is what it is because what it was and what it will turn out to be. International Relations (capital I.R.) is what it is because what it was and what it will be – and that is the time for retrospection of how the concept of reason had been conceived within the *whole* history of Anglophone IR. Instead of listening stories one by one, let us hear a combined one in the end.

Conclusion: The Historical Development of Reason in International Relations

At the start of this thesis I proposed three aims. First, I wanted to use an immanent-historicist method to uncover the centrality of the hidden language of reason which was constitutively crucial to IR discourse (both at the level of individuals and of community). Second, I wanted to show that the four languages of reason – Kantian, utilitarian, axiological and historical – and they have developed, intersected with and transmuted into each other. Third, an auto history of the development of these four languages of reason reflected a dimension of IR history, namely a history of modern international thought in rationality-centered terms.

In the above four chapters I have accomplished the three tasks by telling individually diachronic stories. In conclusion I propose to provide a synchronic, retrospective, overview, unraveling the dual puzzles of what the thinkers mean by “reason” and “Rationalism”, and how (or why) they had used it as a key concept to perform their acts, responding to political events or to each other within a given period. The taxonomy of the four languages is crucial to unravel these riddles.

(i) The Crisis of Kantian Reason: Rational Man versus Power Politics (1919-1939)

The discipline in infancy was marked by the dominance of the Kantian conception of reason. At that time, the subject of Kantian reason was man – plain man, statesmen, the intellectuals and academicians – not the states. Rather than assuming the use of reason as subordinate to the immediate satisfaction of emotion or preferences – which utilitarian reason did – the object

of Kantian reason was to use the intellect to control events (in relation to the environment), harness passions and impulses (towards man himself), and forge mutual understanding and reaching consensus (towards each other).

In general, the term played a dual role. In relation to the past, it served as a reflection: the Great War in 1914 attested to the fact that human nature had far from reached the Kantian notion of man. The prewar “Idealists” believed in reason “with the fervor of religious zeal” as if it was “the supreme arbiter in human conduct” and “complete harmony of human relations was discoverable and attainable by getting reason to prevail, as Hobson claimed in *Problems of a New World* (1920). Zimmern, in his *Europe in Convalescence* (192), reminded “the idealists” that politics was still dominated by “the outward and oversimplified expression of deep lying passions and traditions”, which had not been “touched and transfigured by the harmonizing power of human reason”. In order to prevent another Great War, it was imperative to understand that man had *not* become rational enough to suppress his competitive impulses. Far from holding the naïve belief in human reason, the Liberal Institutionalists shared a grim view of human nature with the Cold War Realists’.

In relation to the future, the Liberal Institutionalists initiated a threefold exhortation for political engagement (commitment) building on the Kantian conception during the interwar period. The ultimate end of the project was to cultivate and exploit human reason in three ways. First, as in domestic/democratic community, people should have recourse to “reason and discussion” rather than employ “forcible means”, as Davies explained in *Force* (1933). The “resort to force” should also be “for the appeal to reason”. Russell, in his “The Revolt against Reason” (1934) and *Which Way to Peace?* (1936), argued that people should have let reason prevailed in political conduct, relying on “persuasion rather than force”, seeking to “persuade by means of argument”, “to use every efforts to persuade others” to abstain from war. For Zimmern, who viewed the League as an “organization of hue and cry, and nothing more”, human reason can manifest as the “voices of reason” (public opinion) which

could demonstrate to the states their legal commitment to the maintenance of international peace. Robert Cecil, in his contribution to *The Intelligent Man's Way to Prevent War* (1933), defined public opinion as a legal arbiter.

The second deployment of reason was through arguments about education. In Zimmern's terms stated in *Learning and Leadership* (1926), "the root of evil is not political but intellectual. It is because the peoples do not understand the problems of the post-war world that their statesmen are unable to control them". Education could provide the common man knowledge to control the political environment. Education could also facilitate the common man to articulate a true voice from reason that linked to the first solution of rational persuasion, since by acquiring knowledge man could bring "his healthy common sense to bear upon" foreign policy.

The third was Zimmern's "international intellectual cooperation". For Zimmern, the intellectuals should perform three services. One was to use his "observant" and "disinterested" mind to uncover to the people the "non-contentious elements" of political matters and "de-emotionalize the material of their study". This was done to provide "natural food" for men to cultivate reason, by which they could exercise control over the environment. Another was to "open the windows of their minds", facilitating them to knit their "intellectual relations" and mutual understanding. Once reaching consensus on the significance of the problem they could "recover control over 'events'." The last was to contrive "a *point of convergence between Knowledge and Power*", and a juxtaposition of "scholarship and statesmanship".

Indeed, using the intellectual's own reason to perform an international service for cultivating the reason of the plain man was the very purpose of pioneering the discipline as an academic study. With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and the Cold War soon following which seemed to have demonstrated the immaturity of the project, however, this Kantian conception of reason experienced a significant demise.

(ii) *From the Second World War to Cold War (Part I, 1940-1959I):*

*Morgenthau and the Realist Reorientation of Kantian Reason and
Wight's "Rationalism"*

From 1940 to 1969, the conceptions of reason in IR underwent great differentiation and development. Like the Kantian reason upheld by the Liberal Institutionalists as a *political* concept, the varied conceptions during this period were profoundly interconnected with the political events, especially the Cold War and nuclear weapons. Yet, unlike the discipline in infancy where only one conception was dominant, there occurred several conceptions that were more or less related to the previous Kantian one.

The first was the "Realist" reconstruction of Kantian reason. The failure of interwar Liberal Internationalism gave the Kantian idea of reason notoriety and generated the large-scale "Realist" critique in the formative years of IR as a discipline. This skepticism towards reason was reinforced by the commencement of the Cold War after 1946 and the Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons in 1949. It was simply impossible to behold the old hope that by rational discussion and intellectually mutual understanding the Americans and Soviets could reach peace. Nevertheless, the Realists did not as much completely repudiate the Kantian idea of reason as undertake a reconstruction. Except for Carr's denunciation of the "doctrine of reason" and "intellectualism of international politics" – an age Carr bemoaned in *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939* (1939) that had "so unreservedly proclaimed the supremacy of the intellect" – most Realists displayed a transitive, antinomic, position towards reason.

On the one hand, they stressed that the Idealists' project, based on the Kantian conception, entailed the threefold misunderstandings of "the nature of man", "the nature of the [social] world", and "the nature of reason itself" that Morgenthau stated in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (1946). For

Morgenthau, “to be successful and truly ‘rational’ in social action” and to establish oneself “as the representative of true reason”, demanded the recognition of the importance of multidimensionality of man, where power plays no less an important role than his intellectual faculty.

On the other hand, the Realists also inherited the Idealists’ emphasis on reason as an intellectual faculty whose use was indispensable for designating political conduct. Morgenthau, for instance, stated that “politics must be understood through reason”, although “it is not in reason that it finds its model”. In order to disclose to the Americans that their foreign policy might be too sentimental in their tackling of foreign affairs, Morgenthau started to construct his Realism, at the bottom of which was the Kantian conception of reason. Morgenthau waged his war of reason on two fronts. One was political, the other intellectual. The “crusading spirit”, “sentimentalism” and “neo-isolationism” committed by the Truman administration towards the Soviet Union rather demonstrated the requirement for a “rational guidance for political action”, “sound political thinking”, “a clear and concrete understanding of what is it we are fighting”, and a “rational approach to the problem of American assistance”. Rather than repudiating the significance of reason, Morgenthau urged in his *In Defense of the National Interest* (1951) for “framing a rational foreign policy” to intellectually discipline political conduct. Such a rational foreign policy was able to adjust the relation between means and ends – “to limit their objectives in view of the relative scarcity of available power” – and the crux was to “think about foreign policy in terms of power” rather than in terms of intellectually mutual dialogue, understanding, and moral interdependence. During the Eisenhower government, however, Morgenthau saw more deviations from such an ideal. The enlargement of Asian commitments and the inaction in Europe incurred Morgenthau’s denunciation that the foreign policy was suffering from “an all-pervading deficiency of understanding”, the “clumsiness and confusions” of intellectual guidance, and the “unsophisticated and mechanical way of thought”. For Morgenthau, the nub of the problem was not political but intellectual, not

“the quality of specific policies” but “the quality of the thought which goes into them”. What was in urgent demand was to think of a “rational foreign policy”, a “political doctrine” that “would give political meaning to those technical activities and co-ordinate them with the over-all objectives of our political policy”. The military aid had “no rational political objective”, for that policy was “lacking in the practical discipline which is the reflection, in the field of action, of the discipline of the intellect.” When a statesman was not sure “in the knowledge of what I seek to achieve and how to go about achieving it”, no common direction, no standard for evaluation and no detailed arrangement would be prescribed. In crafting policy, reason was indispensable for exercising control and offering a center of purpose, a source of meaning around which all the detailed proceedings should be arrayed.

What deserves special mention was Kenneth Waltz’s *Man, the State and War* (1959) and Martin Wight’s lectures on *International Theory: The Three Traditions* in the late 1950s. Both participated in and were shaped by the movement of Realist critique. Waltz criticized the Kantian conception of man depicted by Kant, Cobden and Hobson for their inadequate explanation of war that is too internalist to be valid. This critique, however, would lead to his search for an external account that culminate two decades later in *Theory of International Politics* (1979) which would culminated in an axiological account of rationality.

Martin Wight’s tradition of Rationalism depicted in his *International Theory* was the second main development (compared with Morgenthau) that was both conditioned by and differentiated from the Realists.¹ The international thoughts of such “respected names” as Zimmern, Angell, and Woolf – their advocate of cultivating reason, furthering intellectual cooperation and moral interdependence to prevent the war – were too familiar to Wight. Wight was no less familiar with Morgenthau’s rational “Realism”. But Wight, despite viewing

¹ Before the “English School” was coined many regarded Wight as a leading Realist thinker.

reason as an intellectual faculty of man, a view shared by both his Idealist/Realist contemporaries, had endowed it with a much stronger historical, sociological and moral sense. Unlike Morgenthau's rational statesman who pursues "*national* interest" through the discipline of action by the intellect, Wight's rational man presupposes the overcoming of his "sinful, pugnacious and irrational" nature, and thus a societal prospect marked by "reciprocal goodwill", by the political life that is natural to him and the possibility of participation in a wider international society. Unlike the Idealists whose idea of reason seems to be overly progressive, Wight's notion of reason carries with it a shade of historical agnosticism, a color of cautious attitude towards human nature. For Wight, finally, what also distinguished Rationalism was its emphasis on the problem of "political morality". "To be a Rationalist politician", Wight declared, "is to exist in a state of moral tension between the actual and the desirable". Moral conduct could neither be pursued as the individuals' duty, nor in the name of the *raison d'état*, but as part of the "moral tensions inherent[ly] in political action" which appeals to the principle of "lesser evil".

(iii) From the Second World War to Cold War (Part II, 1960-1969): The Rise of Utilitarian Reason and Raymond Aron's Reasonableness

During the transition from the Second World War to the commencement of the Cold War, a third significant development was the import of utilitarian reason into the discipline. The early Cold War period, characterized by the high level of tension between the superpowers and especially the shadow of a nuclear war, proved to be one of the most stimulating event (just as stimulating as its own end in 1991) for the development of reason in Anglophone IR theories.

The recruitment of the "Soldiers of Reason" brought their own conception of reason into the field, giving rise to a significant transformation of terminology from "reason" to "rationality". The concept of rationality and two person games

were so geared to the “reality” of Cold War politics. Utilitarian rationality was depicted as possessing two attributes, both of which needed highlighting against the Kantian conception. One was Schelling’s definition that rationality was a property “not just of intelligent behavior”, but “of behavior motivated by a conscious calculation of advantages” on the basis of “an explicit and internal[ly] consistent value system”. For utilitarian rationality, ordinal calculation was far from complete. Ordinal calculation of interest and risk was requisite. The other was the role played by emotion in their account. Whereas the thinkers of the Kantian conception were dismayed by emotion (the Idealists and Morgenthau), the utilitarian rationalists construed emotional behavior as a way of maximizing interest. Schelling’s “rationality of irrationality”, Snyder’s inclusion of “emotional value” into calculation, were exemplifications.

On the basis of the utilitarian conception, the IR theorists presented a variety of theories in which the rational ego was capable of deploying many strategies to outwin the opponent as well as halt the crisis at the very brink of actual conflict. Thomas Schelling demonstrated how in sequential and one-shot games, one rational player can deter the adversary by coupling a promise with threat. Gellen Snyder envisaged a strategy of inflicting costly retaliation under rational and uncertain condition: the opponent’s calculation of the probable costs and benefits of attack can determine its conduct and thus the more costly the attack the less likely aggression. Thomas Schelling envisaged that in uncertain and irrational (the rational player pretending to be) conditions, brinkmanship can be executed in such a way that, the player’s irrational commitment to unbearable cost and unknown procedures such as some “chance, accident”, or “just process that we do not entirely understand” can deter the adversary. Herman Khan’s Chicken Game pointed to an uncertain but rational game.

The impacts of the rational deterrence theories were many, but the principal two were the introduction of the concept of utilitarian rationality into the field, which influenced such later scholars as the Neo-Neo theorists, and stimulated

enormous controversy over the concept in the 1960s. Two noticeable responses deserved mention. Morgenthau responded to the deterrence theorists, warning that nuclear weapons had already obliterated the ultimate end (or any intelligibility) of using nuclear war as an instrument. It was “the *reduction ad absurdum* of policy”, “an instrument of universal destruction”. Indeed, “force rationally employed is the supreme guarantee of peace”, but the possibility of using nuclear weapons have to be ruled out. Once again, Morgenthau saw the specter of the Idealists hanging around. These Deterrence Theorists had presumed that if statesman could cultivate reason in a cold, calculative, manner, their deterrence could necessarily work to deter the opponent. Thus, “nations confront each other not as living historic entities with all their complexities but as rational abstractions, after the model of ‘economic man’, playing games of military and diplomatic chess according to a rational calculus that exists nowhere but in the theoretician’s mind”.

Like Morgenthau (but wrongly pinning him down with the Deterrence Theorists), Raymond Aron also proposed a dualistic critique and an alternative criterion of reasonable conduct. Aron’s “reasonableness” marked the fourth main development of the conception of reason. Aron’s first critique, resembling that of Morgenthau, is centered on the intelligibility and instrumentality of nuclear weapons. Were statesmen “always able to abide by the dictates of reason...defined by the theoreticians”, both “intelligent and well-informed”? No, “the passions, the follies, the ideas and the violence of the century” may come into play”. Furthermore, not every element is calculable in a quantitative sense – the death of human beings, and the superpowers’ contestation of wills as a political struggle which may lead to a nuclear war to resolve their antagonism – nor can calculation be conducted as the way Snyder envisages. Unlike Morgenthau, however, Aron proposed a criterion of reasonable conduct. “Is it enough to consider merely the rational elements, in order to produce a sketch or paint a portrait in accord with the model’s essence?” The historical-sociological condition, under which states and statesman conduct their

diplomatic-strategic action, gives rise to “the plurality of concrete objectives and of ultimate objectives”. It delimits the ends as well as means of political action. Reasonableness, as Hoffmann clarified, “entails value judgments in addition to the calculation of forces”.

The ultimate factor is the Détente between superpowers and the rise of interdependence and economic issues. These two, which caused the change of focus, had paradoxically enough given rise to the second wave of the utilitarian movement in the 1980s.

(iv) The Innovation of Axiological Reason (1970-1979)

In Waltz’s view, the explanation of political conduct in terms of the rational faculty of man – either in the form of Morgenthau’s rational Realism or deterrence theory – is utterly inadequate. Instead, the cause of political action lies in something external and circumstantial that can constrain, intermediate, and subdue, human action. This is what he identifies as “system”.

Far from repudiating the significance of the term, Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics* (1979) introduced a novel conception of rationality. It presents a theory of axiological rationality in three aspects. First, structure molds conduct “through socialization of the actors and through competition among them”. Socialization brings “member[s] of a group into conformity with its norms” and establishes “norms and encourage conformity”. Selection ensures that the norms will be followed by “rewarding some behaviors and punishing others”. As Waltz himself cautioned, the function of structure requires no actors to consciously rationally maximize their interest: a structure, acting like a directive or even inductive rule, “spurs the actors to accommodate their ways to the socially most acceptable and successful practices”.

Second, the international, anarchical, structure is in itself an “order without an orderer”. The rule of nobody is not tantamount to no rule. Instead, anarchy is itself a rule of the game that “determines the kind of player who is likely to

prosper". It is an "imperative" that has lasted ever since the formation of the realm; it is the command to 'take care of yourself!'. Under such anarchical organizing principles, states as units will be required "to maintain or improve their positions by maneuvering, by bargaining, or by fighting". Unless they follow the order, they "will fail to prosper, will lay themselves open to dangers, will suffer". Once again, Waltz clarifies that his theory supposes no correspondence between motive and results, and "requires no assumptions of rationality or of constancy of will on the part of all of the actors".

Third, the anarchical order or "power political game" is maintained by the balance of power, which is played in accordance with distinct rules under a different "distribution of capability". In multipolarity, the "game of power politics" is played with flexibility in making alliances, as it "if really played hard, presses the players into two rival camps". The flexibility in alignment at the same time enhances "uncertainty and miscalculation" that may unfold in a series of events leading unexpectedly to war. In bipolarity, by contrast, the "rigidity of alignment" makes "for flexibility of strategy and the enlargement of freedom of decision". It is characterized by the "clarity of dangers" and "certainty about who has to face them", and thus the result that "the incentives to a calculated response stand out most clearly". Reaction has "to be wary, alert, cautious, flexible, and forbearing". Within such a game, Waltz declared, "rules of reciprocity and caution prevail". Notice once again that Waltz clarifies that the balance of power is maintained by the systematic urge of keeping one's survival rather than by the states' motive to maximize power, and conditioned by the distribution of capability at the systematic level.

The time when Waltz's *Theory* was released was inopportune. It coincided at once with the rise of the second wave of utilitarian theorization within IR, and with the flow of anti-positivism into the social sciences in the early 1980s. The upshot was its suffering from the same misreading from two opposite intellectual springs.

For the utilitarianists, such as Keohane and Krasner, Waltz had constructed

such a system theory that it presented “a world of rational self-seeking actors”, “a world of sovereign states seeking to maximize their interest and power”. It was a theory that by “taking rationality as a constant”, the states’ response to “the incentives and constraints imposed by their environments” became conspicuous. Anarchy was not received as an order without orderer. Rather, as Oye and Grieco understood it, anarchy was the very absence of order that perpetuated the “rational egoists” in international politics to ruthlessly pursue their interest: “no overarching authority to prevent others from using violence...to destroy or enslave them”, and that “no central authority imposes limits on the pursuit of sovereign interests”. The axiologically rational theory built by Waltz on the concepts of system and anarchy was debased into a utilitarian form.

For the Reflectivists, Waltz also presented a theory underpinned by utilitarian rationality. Ashley, exploiting Habermas’ division between practical and technical reason, condemned the instrumental use of reason to maximize national advantage at the expense of human interest which should have become the ultimate end. For Ashley, Waltz’s *Theory*, “modeled on the individualist rationalism of Adam Smith’s Political Economy”, was the exemplar of “economicism” and “utilitarianism” that collapsed “into technical reason”. Far from trying to forge an intersubjective understanding between the scholar and statesmen – as Morgenthau’s classical rational Realism did – Waltz expected that by contriving an objectified system theory, political actions could be explained in a positivistic way. For Kratochwil, similarly, Waltz’s *Theory*, ruled out the significance of international institutions, leaving only the balance of power based on the assumption of “the maximization of power” to explain every conduct. It was by taking this misreading of Waltz as foil that Kratochwil would in the late 1980s develop a conception of rationality as embedded in games, bearing remarkable resemblance to that of Waltz’s. Wendt, although capturing Waltz’s conceptualization of the distribution of capability as an antecedent condition for strategic calculation, still contended that the distribution of

capability is but another form of “situation determinism”, shared with Mesquita’s account of war in terms of relational calculation in *The War Trap* (1981).

Kaplan and Knutsen were right to highlight the ideas of “collective rationality” and “systematic rationality” underlying Waltz’s *Theory*. Unfortunately, the most (misleading) profound effect made by *Theory* was the very opposite. It was understood as a theory showing that states were rational egoists and maximized their interest and power under a perennial condition of the absence of order, which provided seeming endorsement to the development of the second wave of utilitarianism led by Keohane in the 1980s.

(v) The Reign of Utilitarian Reason (1980-1990)

Throughout the 1980s, utilitarian rationality, which had been used by Gilpin, Bueno de Mesquita, Keohane, Stein, Axelrod to explain both conflict and cooperation among states, became then the most significant and supreme theoretical concept.

The alleged dominance of the utilitarian conception of reason was a very complex historical phenomena. The rationalistic dominance had two pillars. In the first place, the supremacy of utilitarian rationality claimed by Keohane as unifying Morgenthau, Waltz, and the Neoliberals into a single “research program” was based on Keohane’s conflation of three languages of reason into a single utilitarian one. From his article “Theory of World Politics: Realism and Beyond” (1983) to “International Institutions: the Two Approaches” (1988), Keohane had constantly interpreted Morgenthau as a thinker of utilitarian reason. For Morgenthau, Keohane interpreted, states had been instrumentally “seeking to maximize their power” rather than intellectually disciplining its use. World politics for Morgenthau “can be analyzed as if states were unitary rational actors, carefully calculating costs of alternative courses of action and seeking to maximize their expected utility”. Morgenthau’s idea of rationality was “standard in neoclassical economics”, which viewed states as if having

“consistent, ordered preferences, and that they calculate the costs and benefits” to “maximize their utility”. Similarly to his interpretation of Morgenthau’s reason into an instrumental one that was barely concerned with the end of political conduct, Keohane also read a utilitarian-rational theory into Waltz’s *Theory*. For Waltz, Keohane argued, “system-constraint analysis” could not function unless the actors possessed constant identity as interest maximizers. The assumption of utilitarian rationality was also indispensable for Waltz’s “theory of the balance of power to hold” – although Waltz himself clarified the non-necessity of such a requirement, Keohane still insisted the significance of assuming them as power maximizing, which was self-contradictory to the theory of balance of power.

In the second place, the Neo-Neo theorists deployed the concept to show how pure conflict and cooperation could occur, which was in contrast to the previous use of utilitarian rationality to show how a rational actor can contrive a deterrence of the opponent *without* incurring a pure conflict that puts physical strength in actual test and make conflict resolution *without* pure cooperation that might concede interest to the opponent.

To start from the Neoliberal wing. Keohane’s own deployment of utilitarian rationality in the article “The Demand for International Regimes” (1982) and *After Hegemony* (1984), as well as Stein’s “Coordination and Collaboration” (1982) and Axelrod’s *The Evolution of Cooperation* (1984), contributed enormously to the Rationalistic supremacy. Underlying all three’s theoretical accounts of the enduring usefulness of international institutions was their concern with demonstrating that the political turbulence occurred in the 1970s might not lead inevitably to the return to greater conflict and the collapse of international institutions. Instead, states as interest maximizers would create and maintain institutions to enhance their advantages. For Keohane, states would maintain institutions not merely because of the benefits *supplied* by joining institutions would exceed the cost. Rather, to inverse the Coase theorem, one discovered that states also had the *demand* for institutions to exist: institutions can advance states’ interests by reducing the transaction costs and

alleviating the difficulty of the flow of information. In Stein's account, international institutions would be extensively maintained because they facilitated states to eschew sub-optimal outcome when states pursue their individualistic interest in a simultaneous and one shot Prisoners' Dilemma game. Likewise, for Axelrod, institutional cooperation could be fostered as long as the players wanted to use Tit-for-Tat for maximize their interests across a certain time.

For the Neorealists, scholars such as Gilpin and Mesquita used utilitarian rationality to explore when a hegemonic war would occur. For Gilpin, a state would maximize its interest if a challenge to the existing hegemon could gain net benefits, and a state would keep expanding until the equilibrium point when no further marginal utility could be obtained. In Mesquita's theory, the maximization of interest was highly relational. An actor would wage a war against another if one actor, by taking into account of both actors' calculation, expected that net benefit could be gained.

(vi) The Development of Reason in the Post-Cold War Era (1991-2009)

The most controversial, post-utilitarian, movement was generated by the "Postmodernists" because of their association of reason not only with the problem of epistemology but with the one of "discipline". From the beginning of 1990s, there appeared increasingly more voices denouncing "the enlightened road [of utilitarian reason]". For Der Derian, it was through the concept of rationality that the legitimacy of theorization was monopolized and the discipline of the discipline was exercised. David Campbell, although professing later (1998) that Postmodernists performed a better service in saving the critical function of reason, had in fact undertaken a critique of the concept in *Writing Security* (1992). The "intellectual exclusion" of the Postmodernists within the IR community, as Andrew Linkater later called it, generated the first powerful movement of criticizing utilitarian rationality.

Against the Postmodernist movement but equally against the Neo-Neo theorists was another movement initiated by Fred Halliday and Justin Rosenberg. Halliday's *Rethinking International Relations* (1994) and *Revolution in World Politics* (1998), at the same time criticized the "irrationality" of Ashley and others and established a new line of enquiry that would be later called by David Boucher "historical reason".

The third, and one of the most influential precursors of Constructivism, was Kratochwil's reorientation of "game" to the Wittgensteinian direction in such articles as "The Embarrassment of Chang" (1993). Like Fierke who would later follow the same path, Kratochwil construed another conception of rationality in which "rules and norms are not simply the distillation of individual utility calculations but rather the antecedent conditions for strategies and for the specification of criteria of rationality". For Kratochwil, "Reason is, then, concerned with the preconditions (or 'transcendental' conditions, we might say), of a 'moral' discourse, in which the effects of our actions on others can be assessed.

Towards the end of 1990s, IR witnessed an explosion of various conceptions of rationality, all of which targeted the Neo-Neo theories as the principal opposite. Andrew Moravcsik, in his "Taking Preference Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics" (1997), retained utilitarian rationality as a crucial assumption but restructured the liberal theory atrophied by Neoliberalism into "a non-ideological and non-utopian form" that is "coequal with and more analytically more fundamental" than either Neorealism or Neoliberalism. Andrew Linklater, in his *The Transformation of Political Community* (1998), argued for "a rational morality with universal significance" to recover the Liberal Institutionalists' program, and for a "higher rationality" against the reduction of "rational political action in international relations to technical consideration". In his study on *Political Theories of International Relations* (1998), Boucher explored a tradition of what he named "historical reason": it is a criterion of political conduct that is at once resistant to the ruthless pursuit of interest and

to the general postulate of moral principles, which needs to “be found in the historical process itself”. K.M. Fierke, in her *Changing Games and Changing Strategies* (1999), drew on Wittgenstein’s language game to show that IR theorists should envisage a rationality that is “a part of our grammar for operating in different types of social or political context”. It was the “rationality of moving towards a new game”. Finally, Christian Reus-Smit, in his *The Moral Purpose of the States* (1999), rejected the “deontological conception of institutional rationality”, and proposed instead “a historically informed constructivist theory”, an “*embedded* rationality” that conceptualizes states action as conditioned by a “rationality as a culturally and historically contingent form of consciousness”.

Now coming to the turn of 2000, the German Idealists such as Muller and Risse finally took the baton. The extreme resemblance between the “German Idealists” and “English Idealists” of which the former were unaware: both assume that reasoned dialogue and argumentation can make a huge difference in world politics. Rationality was defined as to “seek a reasoned consensus” where the agents “are themselves prepared to be persuaded”. “International politics consists predominantly of actions that take the form of language”, proclaimed Muller, “action [that] oriented to reaching understanding, or communicative action”. “Politics”, went on Muller, “must for the most part be produced through understanding via the medium of language”. “The goal of the discursive interaction is to achieve argumentative consensus with the other”, clarified Risse, “not to push through one’s own view of the world or moral values”.

These are the developments of the concept in Anglophone IR from 1919 to 2009.

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